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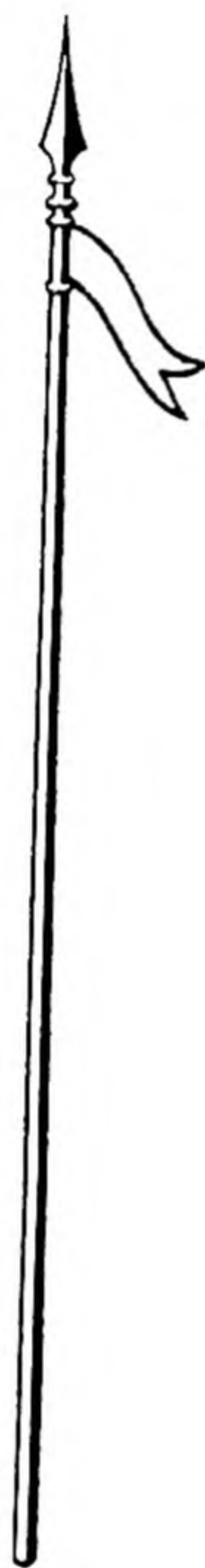
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CHAPTER ONE

PALADINS IN THE MIST

THE SQUANDERING BY THE FRANCO-BRITISH VICTORS IN THE last war, through nearly a score years, of the commanding position they gained at a cost to themselves of two-and-a-half million dead, of vast suffering, a shattering material legacy and a severe moral one, the close memory of that joint failure may make some people chary of hailing, with any excess of zeal or enthusiasm, democracy's heroes, liberty's champions. A great war coming twice in the adult spell of a life counting hardly more than forty years does tend to condition lung willingness in respect of demonstrative approval.

A generation ago we had less difficulty in evolving our heroes. We gave full rein to our ardour. Whenever we thought about it, we knew that the war was against Kaiserism, and that we were bound—bound—to win it. How nearly we were wrong has since been shown. The point is that we responded, had our thrills, as the lances for liberty took the field: the Hun (after Kipling) already at the gate.

Place of honour fell to Albert of Belgium, soldier and leader of a small country brutally trampled over, as other nations have been in recent times by Hitler. It was the Kaiser then, and there comes back that *Punch* cartoon of the Supreme War Lord standing sword in hand and saying to Belgium's King: 'So you see—you've lost everything'. And the taunted one's reply: 'Not my soul'. The Imperial Potsdam reference was to the offer to let Belgium off lightly if she would sanction the German invasion, permitting a lightning movement to the channel ports and to the rear of the French armies. In refusing to lift the latch to Kaiserism at Liège, King Albert scotched that plan. He had a treaty to stand by, and he chose the path of observing it, however hard the consequences. And hard they were. A few tragic

weeks, and *le Roi Chevalier* had dragged the remnants of his army across to a last tiny strip of Belgian soil, by the mouth of the Yser. But here he was to stand to the end.

There were times when the Allied efforts to regain Belgium seemed hopeless, and when a less resolute ruler might have lent ear to the voice of the tempter. Half-a-dozen times King Albert was approached by Germany with a view to his making a separate peace, and it would have been no pleasant affair for the Franco-British had he consented to negotiations. So very much of the moral factor, upon which we relied before the world, was wrapped up with Belgium. King Albert knew that perfectly well.

Meanwhile, inside Belgium, a second figure was emulating this steadfastness.

'A hero,' it has been written, 'an historic figure in the true sense of the term, is a man who arises during some crisis in the history of the world to arrest or turn aside by a striking and possibly unconscious attitude the course of events. Such a man was Cardinal Mercier.'

The Cardinal radiated a spiritual serenity: none could come near him, so it was averred, without feeling in the presence of somebody different. Doubling this asset, priceless in itself at the time, was an urgently practical side in protecting his flock from material German depredations. It was prestige which, with the Archbishop of Malines, governed everything and everybody—even bad old Governor von Bissing himself. Prestige, most precarious pinnacle, if not to attain, certainly to maintain. The Cardinal maintained it by keeping constant throughout. His views became fully known to all through his courageous Pastorals. The population should refrain from acts of hostility and respect the laws in force but 'the sole legitimate authority in Belgium is that belonging to our King'. Re-read, these Pastorals constitute gems of erudite daring and joshing—that is the word—of dull-witted semi-gaolers.

But they also went to form the charter of liberty for overrun Belgium. Without them, the country might have disintegrated, and this beacon beckoning on England and France become extinguished.

A second royal soldier who came to represent in his person the struggle of the small with the bully was young Crown Prince Alexander of Serbia—the same who later died with an assassin's bullets in his breast, at Marseilles. Invalid old King Peter still nominally ruled, and invalid old Marshal Putnik still nominally commanded the army: it was young Alexander, barely turned twenty-five, who embodied his country's heroic resolve never to give in. He stayed up with the fighting forces practically throughout—when away, it was usually on visits to allied capitals, making sure of further backing—to reach the heights in the terrible retreat of the whole army over the Albanian mountains, in mid-winter.

But that host, resuscitated on Corfu, lived to fight another day, and to conquer. A Franco-Serbian offensive cracked Bulgaria, first of the enemy to throw up the sponge. And young Alexander led a glorious advance—rush—up country, through Uskub to Belgrade.

He lived to be a dictator.

On the day of execution, no mistake was made with him. France's royal guest slumped in the back seat of the car, head bowed over a reddening tunic, and died probably as the vehicle dashed and sirened between gaping pavement crowds along the Rue de Rome, heading for the Town Hall. Two wounded had been removed from the car at the scene of the crime. General Georges with difficulty survived to be Joffre's successor in the present war. Léon Barthou, Foreign Minister, need not have died from his arm wound. Barthou was the most precise of persons. One remembers him as chairman of the Reparations Commission, fairly making the then Sir John Bradbury

tingle, by his eternal insistence that a pile of German telegraph poles was lacking, or so many tons of coal or coke. Few were ever so orderly and logical and exact of mind as Léon Barthou. There is irony in the circumstance that he lost his life as a result of just one of those slips that will occur. A gendarme put the tourniquet on below the wound; and there it remained while the old fellow's life's blood spurted and streamed on the floor of a taxi threading with difficulty to hospital.

Not by any stretch could one associate the Grand Duke Nicholas with concern for democracy. Rather did he command the Russian armies with the touch of the tyrant. Yet he was the only force out there that might have pulled Russia together, that is, aided freedom elsewhere, and he fought corruption and rottenness as ruthlessly as he fought the Germans—recollect it was this Romanoff soldier who ordered the opening advance into East Prussia, which eased the pressure on Paris, as it was he who got clean over the Carpathians in early 1915, and who might have continued on without the ensuing *débâcle*, had Nicolai Nicolaievitch not been criminally let down by his War Minister. I drove a red-cross car through that helter-skelter before Mackensen, and the Russian rank and file had run out of ammunition by the second day, the artillery out of shells on the fourth.

Even when disgraced to the Caucasus, because the Tsar believed his uncle to be plotting to take the crown, which would have been a first-rate notion, this last of his kind scored eloquent military successes.

Nicholas died as much of lack of the will to continue living as from the often treacherous Riviera winter climate. A few days before he took to his bed for the last time, I came upon him by an Antibes kiosk. There was the former Commander-in-Chief of the fabled 'Steamroller' (red flag in front unperceived) listlessly turning over the pages

of a faded *Illustration*, and I thought of the last time I had seen him, and how I had cursed him. For two hours, he had kept five of us waiting outside his train H.Q. at Baranovitchi, only to come out eventually and wave us off with a summary French, 'If you write lies, you leave!'

For a moment I thought of recalling that incident to the gaunt old skeleton of a man, but the stooping six-feet-six moved off. So only the *patron* of the kiosk heard the tale.

'*Fini, cœur rompu,*' commented that citizen. 'They have turned him out of the home he had made near Paris. Not enough money.'

When a General Galliéni 'of Madagascar' was retrieved from Riviera retirement and made Military Governor of Paris, in late August 1914, probably not more than one man in England figuratively rubbed his hands, but he the most important: Lord Kitchener. The two had fought side by side, as twenty-year-olds, at Bazeilles, in the Franco-Prussian War, when Galliéni was taken prisoner—and, the standard 'Life' insists, Kitchener with him. But even without that, the two lives took arrestingly parallel courses. Africans both, when one was finding his feet in Senegal, the other was doing no less in Egypt; one had not been long back from Tonkin glory, when the other set off in pursuit of the same in the Sudan; and there followed Madagascar for the one, and South Africa for the other. For thirty years, each followed the other's colonial career rising steadily towards the prodigious.

Galliéni, backed by Sapper Joffre, made Madagascar in nine years, tamed what was nine-tenths an 'insurgent forest', and the remaining tenth disease-ridden agglomerations. Part of the taming had to do with the rampageous last Queen Rànavàlona, whose greatest sorrow was that Galliéni selected the Isle of Réunion as her place of exile and not the Rue de la Paix.

One is particularly interested in Joseph-Simon Galliéni,

of hard Pyrenean officer stock, because he seems to be the admitted hero or inspirational fount of the French army of today, in the sense that so many of its leading soldiers either lately dead or still alive—most importantly, those in highest command in this war—owned or own him as their master. Lyautey, the royalist ‘aristo’, led the way in admiration, wrote home from Tonkin at the end of the eighties, delighting in his discovery of his C.O., who drank only water and was vegetarian, but who had a gorgeous way of delegating responsibility (‘I occupy myself with planning and directing, only I leave all detail to others’) and of consigning red tape and interference from home to the proper quarter. Lyautey the artist was tickled that this ascetic organizer took ‘a daily “brain bath”, as he terms it, of the new arrival, D’Annunzio’.

If any soldier sprang to lasting fame, it was Galliéni, and within the span of two historic weeks.

We had no idea of what was going on at the time—even those of us in and out of Paris daily, collecting what scraps of news we could—but it has all been made clear since, with sufficient authenticity. On September 2 President Poincaré and his Government departed to Bordeaux, leaving Galliéni in charge of the capital. That night the General proclaimed with a pretty sarcasm: ‘The Government of the Republic has left Paris, in order to give a new impulse to the National Defence. I have been ordered to defend Paris against the invader. This mandate, I shall fulfil to the end.’

‘What do you imply by that last line?’ enquired War Minister Millerand, before catching his train.

‘Street by street, house by house. The bridges will be blown up, and the Eiffel Tower, the factories of Puteaux, all the fortifications of Paris and all the markets, if it is necessary. That’s what I’ve got to do, isn’t it?’

‘You alone shall decide.’

To departing Premier Viviani, who in his excitable way had thrown off 'You shall command also the armies of Paris', Galliéni enquired 'Where are they—I haven't noticed them?' All 'the Saviour of Paris' was to get was Maunoury's retreating 6th Army, for a few days only. But those days sufficed to garner unfading renown for Galliéni who, to put matters squarely, first saw what could be gained from von Kluck's blunder in offering for assault the right flank of his army as this marched across the entrenched camp of Paris.

A typical Galliénism was suddenly to commandeer the 770 taxis of the capital, even from under the persons of clients, and to pile into them the 7th Division which, in true *Blitzkrieg* fashion, clocked down almost in the front line along the Ourcq, there to sway the tide of battle at a decisive moment.

By September 9 the acclaimed 'Saviour of Paris', many insist the saviour of the allied armies, was put back in his place, as Military Governor. Some fun had started,—had not this fellow been a pupil of the firebrand Boulanger, at St. Cyr? Up from Bordeaux, came delegates Briand and Sembat, to find out what truth there might be in tales of Galliéni about to be borne in triumph to the Élysée, simplest of *coups d'état* in a capital abandoned by Government. There may have been a good deal behind the stories, and Clémenceau and Paul Doumer (later the murdered President), both on the spot, would certainly not have been averse,—Doumer had begged permission of Galliéni that he come to Paris, specially to advise, civilly.

But events worked differently: the hero of Paris was made War Minister, in which post he progressively loathed everything at approximately the same period that, across the Channel, his former comrade-in-arms of Bazeilles was beginning to find *himself* out of his element as War Minister. Galliéni was, in addition, mortally ill. Resigning,

he longed to die at St. Raphael but got no farther than a Versailles clinic where, in the last days, there arrived from Poincaré a clear indication that, once the patient was re-established, he was to succeed Joffre.

Galliéni died ten days before Kitchener. They were the same age, sixty-six.

One's purpose here is to point out the people we looked up to, early on, no matter how reputations may later have been questioned. For six months Kitchener *was* England. The whole Continent, over one shading of which I freely trekked at the time, thought the same. Out in the Polish wastes, they would make a terrible hash of the great name. I forget how it went but you can imagine it, when the accusative of another war figure was Lloydem Georgem. Kitchener might have been sent to organize for the Grand Duke, in the first year. They'd have got on together. And the North Sea was not so dangerous then.

In passing, Galliéni was saying, during his great fortnight, that the war would last 'from three to four years'. Almost simultaneously, Kitchener flabbergasted the British world with his 'for at least three years'. The two old friends had met in Paris, on September 1, and probably exchanged views on the matter. At any rate, evidently these colonial soldiers require to be listened to.

A very corpulent, handsome old boy, who did everything each day with regularity, eating, sleeping, 'footing', cards, as if there hadn't been a war on, who seemed freely to be in a state of semi-somnolence when visited, answering 'I nibble', in between yawns, to presidents and people who wished to gain an inkling of his military plans, but who maintained, throughout, an invaluable calm. So, the picture derived from reading prominent biographers of Joffre. It may have been all so. Any successes achieved during Joffre's chieftaincy may have been gained in spite of the General-in-Chief. When asked who won the Battle of the Marne, the

old Marshal contented himself with replying: 'I know who would have been held responsible had it been lost.' Which may have meant much or nothing. Clémenceau insisted in *L'Homme Libre* (censorship functioning) that Joffre first heard of the Battle in the *Petit Parisien*.

All one knows is that we of the outside world—far more outside, in pre-radio days, than is the present world—came swiftly to contemplate this old fellow—'Pappa'—as a species of human fortress. Joffre was all right! He was going to prove a match for the Boche. Had a plan.

Viviani and Asquith were the orators in freedom's cause. Grey greatly heard. Asquith's resonant 'We shall not sheath the sword which we have not lightly drawn' and Grey's 'The lamps in Europe are going out' passed into popular currency. The Frenchman, a burning North African who burnt out tragically in 1921, made some electrifying speeches that were placarded round France. In a land given to *discours*, they were indubitably worth while, though it is noteworthy that no such dizzy flights of rhetoric are attempted, or are necessary, with the French people of today.

None the less, René Viviani made some famous speeches on freedom, and experts still proclaim him to have been the greatest sheer orator of his day.

Then there was Smuts, embodying perhaps more than any other the Dominions' will to liberty. If the first photographs of this Boer wearing the badges of rank of a British general caused some of us to look twice, it left foreigners frankly incredulous. How could such a thing have happened, with Vereeniging barely a dozen years behind? The bitterness that that war had aroused! How could one of its leading campaigners make this *volte-face* so soon? And escape being called a traitor by his own people?

'One of the imponderables,' you would mention. 'The British Empire—Smuts believes in it.'

He still does. There is now no enemy for him to tackle on the African continent, but Jan Smuts, great humanitarian, instantly demonstrated his way of thinking when he put a rapid term to Hertzog's neutrality scheme.

Who else? The French would certainly say Lyautey, who held Morocco, bluffing with a mere handful of troops, and so held all French North Africa without the expected explosion occurring. In that case, there was Jellicoe, 'the only man who could have lost the war in an afternoon'. And if Jellicoe, Beatty, of the saucy air and presumed Nelson touch. A kind of great twin brethren, so we thought, little suspecting what a gulf of temperament, and perhaps more, divided the two men into whose safekeeping had been committed 'Britain's Sure Shield'.

Dominating both was that amazing old sea-dog, Fisher, until the distressing day when he elected to pull down his blind at the Admiralty. Of several powerful characters Britain possessed, Jackie Fisher, father of the Dreadnought, was the oddest and most devastating. He looked odd and he was odd. And what sparks flew off! In memoirs finished at the very end of his life, the sparks, how they yet flew, how the salty, Biblical, old author laid about him! 'A strange old fellow,' some averred. But nobody questioned his brains, power and personality.

Commanding Britain's first continental army since Waterloo (so far and vague was the Crimea, that it hardly counted the same) Sir John French was constantly in the public mind all through the grievous and critical first winter and spring, from Mons to Festubert. 'French's gallant little army.' Here, again, we had no inkling of the true personal situation. How French had to fight interference and intrigue, and fought badly, his Irish heat scarcely the most useful attribute. Let us only hope that the personal lives and distractions of commanders-in-chief shall henceforth be left clean out of things. No more prying from

home, which doesn't pay and is entirely out of focus with the general tragic theme.

Five countries were in at the start the last time Germany's designs upon the liberty of others had to be curbed. When the same task required latterly to be re-shouldered, three nations assumed the opening brunt in what is of course a much wider cause, but so many of whose likely eventual beneficiaries prefer not to quit their neutrality, risk getting hurt by helping while victory is actually being sought.

Almost immediately but two countries remained in the lists against Hitlerism, so that it is with the outstanding warring figures of France and Britain that we must treat: gone such as Albert and Alexander and the Grand Duke. A pity, too, that there is no D'Annunzio. If any man recoiled from Prussianism, lyrically but also in such down-to-earth style, it was this poet bomber-to-be, first to drop leaflets on enemy heads. D'Annunzio was at his Arcachon retreat, in precious languor or poetic rapture, when the puissant magnet of a Paris in peril operated: he was to write that the Galliéni days revealed to him Paris as her immortal self. He returned to Italy, dedicated to bringing in his country against her allies of the day before.

'Be careful,' I quote a friend, 'of rushing in in laudatory style about men who have been caught at the summit of their careers by an Austrian ex-corporal's mad will to war, men who have anyway yet fully to prove themselves.'

A point of view. Yet these men did not find themselves where they were when Hitler struck, by mere chance. They had steadily steered their lives over a period of many years in a manner that fitted each to bear the brunt of responsibility and leadership if peace ceased. War or no war, they had become entitled to greater notice.

CHAPTER TWO

DEMOCRATIC LEADER

BAKER'S BOY—PROFESSOR OF HISTORY—PROVINCIAL MAYOR—front-line soldier—realistic deputy—conscientious minister—authoritarian chief. In these seven stages can be resumed the story of Édouard Daladier, probably the soundest governmental product of the Third French Republic, of whose sixty-nine years he has shared nearly fifty-six.

You will hear people idly ask: 'But is he a second Clémenceau?' Daladier ascended to his authoritarian situation by the will of the French people, as this became progressively expressed in time of peace, and by virtue of abilities and an apprenticeship that may seem almost matter-of-fact when inspected beside the fifty-year-long Clémenceau.

There was something terrific about the old 'Tiger', to which Monsieur Daladier would be the last to claim title. For having accompanied the former to America in the evening of his life, there to act as link between him and the world without as we careered in Steel King Schwab's special train over three dozen State lines—'Tiger's' distinctly bored swan-song—I may be permitted that 'terrific'. Yes, a wonderful old rascal. But with the destructionist in him uppermost all his public life, until that tremendous twelvemonth of 1917-18 when it was given him to save his country from destruction. 'Father Victory', in leggings, cape and old tweed hat. In these days a French Prime Minister once more goes forth from Paris to the trenches in leggings and a doubtful soft hat, and all France is behind him, as it used to be behind the 'Tiger'. Daladier loves France 'as a person' in the same way that Clémenceau did; and will show a similar inflexible (but not savage) will to victory. And politically, both men qualified as liberal-minded Jacobins. But there ends a short if powerful parallel.

The quiet, withdrawn Daladier has ever been, and will be again, the patient, steady constructor, for whom are anathema such things as were the very food and wine of life for Clémenceau: the clawing and devouring, the polemics and jockeying, scandals and alarums, the whole explosive-ness.

Oddly, it was again a train, as temporary home, that brought me to close quarters with Monsieur Daladier. We correspondents went ahead in presidential train No. 1, but on that unforgettable Tunisian triumph of early 1939, constant opportunity arose to note what style of man this was. Possibly too many French people flatter themselves or their race when they speak of him as average—'*comme un Français moyen*'. He speaks on the radio '*comme un Français moyen*'. Therefore, he must reason as one. Be one. Take his eve of war broadcast:

'There is not one of you who does not understand that if, by lack of foresight or by cowardice, we permit all these people to succumb one after another, very soon this effort to dominate Europe will turn quickly against our own country. Remember, too, that that onrush on France would have at its disposal far more vast means of action and resources than at present threaten our country.

'In these solemn hours we would all like to believe that wisdom and reason will triumph in the end. But if all our efforts remain useless, we shall appeal to Frenchmen and to French women—to your desire not to suffer servitude. It is that courage and that will which animate you young men, who by hundreds of thousands have rejoined your regiments, with the grave, silent resolution of which no country in the world has ever shown a more magnificent example.

'Frenchmen, you wish to remain free. We want peace, but we cannot accept or submit to violence.

'Frenchmen, French women, I have no need to tell you your duty.'

Such simplicity of utterance may proclaim an average citizen; rather is it that, drawing from the people his strength to govern, his power to lead, the speaker does not wish to advance a step beyond their comprehending sanction—always the solid wall behind him—and that he feels the one satisfactory way to obtain this is by means of a straightforward use of the French language, as it happens, his own mode of expression.

But . . . 'average' . . . ?

In the nineties of last century, a sturdy, taciturn boy, fresh-complexioned and blue-eyed, delivered the bread for his father, Daladier the baker, of the narrow and sinuous street of the Tour-des-Eaux in the old quarter of Carpentras. Here was the heart of that old Roman colony of Provence, which has inherited a longer line of civilization than any other people in Europe. Visigoths and Ostrogoths, Franks and Saracens, harried and ruled them, and left traces among them of their passage, but out of it all came a strong, independent, wilful people, tenaciously combative for this principle: that a man and his family are more important than the empires and systems that sweep over them and pass. A somewhat earthy people, these Southerners of the Rhône Valley, but kindly, passionate, hard-working, tempered by the brilliant sun and the bitter mistral that bends hedges and olive trees permanently.

A hundred years ago, Carpentras was a walled town whose beauty outshone Avignon, according to Prosper Mérimée. But towers and ramparts were pulled down, and for some reason this corner of Vaucluse became a butt for French wit—as Brittany and Alsace have since become despite efforts to stop it. Vaudevillists were seldom without a number ragging Carpentras and its uncouth locals, their artless ways and weird pronunciation. The distant record tells how Louis XIV reacted when they presented to him, accenting the sibilants, a certain sire Babilas de Sobirats de

Carpentras. 'What a name! What a country! What a language'! ironically admired the Sun King.

The solid Carpentrassiens could afford to ignore all the taunts. Had not Petrarch spent his schooldays within their crenellated walls? Did not Raspail bring them renown? And J. H. Fabre, the classic entomologist, was he not for long a professor of Carpentras College? Fabre had moved finally to Avignon by the time young Édouard Daladier won a 'purse' enabling him to go to that school. Unceasing serious study, particularly of history and geography, was to provide a further scholarship at Lyons, succeeded by a memorable year in Rome, and it is profitable to learn that this early travel did not uproot the baker's son in any way. What he is, he has always been. Product of the Rhône, impregnated by a Latin heredity that has never ceased murmuring 'order, peace, law'. On a rare occasion M. Daladier was drawn into defining himself. 'What am I? A Roman legionary.' It was the time of the projected Four-Power Pact, and the remark was collected as a mere quip, but there exists a common strain of blood between Mussolini of Northern Italy and Daladier of the old Roman Colony.

Daladier belongs to the soil of his native Provence, and does not dream at nights to the strain of Wagner's music. He and his kind are not visionaries. His origins and his constant study of history preclude any mysticism from his nature. He gives the impression of solidity—a short, stocky man with broad shoulders and grave demeanour. His features seldom light up; in fact, there is a deep sadness in them since the death of his wife some years ago. A scientist's daughter, Mlle Laffont, she had been his unknown *marraine* or war-time godmother. She was everything to this retiring family man, who shunned social life, preferring his books. Only in quite recent times may the shadow have lessened with the remarkable rise of eighteen-year-old Jean Daladier, who has been complimented at the

Élysée on the success of his Junior Empire League, to which youths of varying political persuasion have been attracted. The father's first ministerial post was the Colonies, so that the elder son's selection of terrain meets with keen parental approval. Jean was already an excellent speaker when he left the Lycée Pasteur at Neuilly, nest of his movement. If his youthfulness should preserve him until peace returns, more will be heard of him.

Of impecunious days as professor of history at Marseilles, little can be retrieved save what senior ex-professor Herriot cares to relate of his fellow-teacher of the first decade of the century. And that is scarcely exciting. Former pupils have testified that their '*prof*' *d'histoire et de géo*' was a decent sort but not easy. So it went on until 1912, year in which Édouard Daladier stepped out to become Mayor of his native Carpentras. He was twenty-seven, packed with historical study, serious-minded to a degree. We have a glimpse of him addressing the celebrated Félibres from the steps of the Town Hall, on their 1913 annual fête of the *Copa Santa*, Catalan loving-cup from which first drank the Provençal poets, Mistral, Roumanille and Aubanel, when they founded the Félibres in 1854, their purpose, to revive the language of Oc.

'You are,' saluted Daladier in his maiden speech, made in the pure tongue of Mistral, 'the devoted pilgrims of our Provençal land whose beauty you tirelessly sing. You teach us to love our maternal language, you uncover for us the nobility of our past and the grandeur of our history. I offer to you all the greeting of our little town, humble and modest, alas! In olden days she held the rank of a capital and her children decorated her with grandiose monuments. In those times she had no masters, or these were far off and respected her franchises. Today, poorer and less concerned with art, Carpentras nevertheless has two claims on your affection: that of never having suffered, in the horror of civil

wars, her pavements to be reddened by the blood of her sons, and that of having remained a town of free men, despite a centralization that strangles us.'

Carpentras has since made renewed headway under a rich Mayor Dreyfus, head of a strong local Jewish Colony whose fathers fled south from Alsace in 1870. The young Daladier was brought up to respect the plus side of this race, if the Alsatian Jews' descent on Carpentras hardly had the effect of lessening the ragging of that town.

Arrived August 1914, and it was good-bye for ever to the backwater of the Rhône Valley and to professorial courses in the Midi. Sergeant Daladier was mobilized straight away with the 34th Infantry, in which he went through the whole war as a front-line soldier, 'collecting' two wounds, three citations, the War Cross, the Legion of Honour, and rising to the rank of captain by sheer hard application and meritorious service. If Hitler has cause to be proud of his part in the last war, so has Daladier, who sincerely hoped that the meeting of three front-line soldiers at Munich, out of four national leaders attending, would mean something.

Daladier returned from the trenches, altered, as everybody else. For fifty-two months he had absorbed modern history of ghastly hue. The making of history beckoned; no longer its teaching. He was of those, perhaps, who wanted to make a brave new world, but one had to go about things practically. Professors of history may learn more than the pupils they teach, concerning how mankind has behaved in the past and may be expected to behave in the future. In very practical, revolutionary mood Daladier entered the Chamber of Deputies. Certain things could and should be done, and there were so few left of his generation—he was thirty-four—to do them.

That was the notorious 'Horizon Blue' chamber of violent chauvinism, and very soon the young Deputy began to attract attention by his brief but pointed interventions on

foreign affairs when he did not hesitate to pit himself against the formidable Bloc National leaders, Millerand and Poincaré, who were 'hypnotized by Rhineland problems and by the literal application of the treaties'. He opposed the Ruhr occupation, demanding that Reparations be handed over to the League so that matters might be agreed upon 'in a spirit of international collaboration'.

These early manifestations are worth recalling if only to rebut the theory that France's Leader is over-given to impulse. Few Frenchmen can have remained so faithful to a general doctrine, not of the partisan or party man, but the result of lucid reflexion by one seeking the truth. Daladier has modified his views, but that is the prerogative of the realist in a changing world. Take his *début* in army polemics. In 1919, he was all for radical French demilitarization. By 1922, he was castigating the concession to Germany of the right to 'a professional army camouflaged as police', and supporting the thesis of the 'armed nation' which 'unites a country like France hostile to any policy of adventure, but resolved to exact respect for its rights and to safeguard by its own efforts its independence and freedom'. Again: 'The mobilization of the army shall be that of the nation'. That was uttered sixteen years before it became the uncomfortable fact of autumn, 1939.

Daladier was so immersed in army matters at the time his sponsor, Herriot, swept into power in 1924, that he confidently expected to become Under-Secretary to General Nollet, at the War Ministry. Herriot considered he could ask more of his one-time pupil and fellow teacher, and gave him the Colonies, where the budding Minister, now forty, soon showed his ability as an administrator. Any amount of building and development had been neglected overseas during the decade since 1914, and the work of renewal was put in train thoughtfully and not wastefully.

A snapshot survives of the younger Daladier traversing

the lobby of the Chamber, time-honoured exchange of hand-shaking, chatter and 'good fellowship'. Daladier has never been *commode*—'convenient'—and it is not hard to see how he came to be nicknamed 'the bull of the Camargue'. In effect, he is shown walking bull-like with head down, almost butting frontally. Jaws set, eyes remote in reflexion, he 'offers a hand to no one, even less does he engage in superfluous words. Decidedly, a man who does not take life lightly! His bearing surprises some to a point of vexation.'

Daladier indubitably ignored that he was vexing anybody. He simply had no social gifts, although this was the happiest period of his life. Daily, life held two divisions: his ministerial bureau, and his villa at Garches. He cycled between the two, and would be met at his suburban gate by his wife.

For the next few years Daladier was principally known to his countrymen as head of the Radical Socialist Party, the most numerous. He would be praised or pilloried as the sectarian chief, animated by partisan passion, yet if some of his speeches sounded that way, it went against the grain with their author, who would have preferred to identify his party with the republican regime, as a whole, and this, in turn, with the Nation. If Daladier was ever a party man in the true sense, he began to free himself a decade ago. An instinctive liberal, he yet refused to ignore that imperious necessities of modern life must limit the economic liberty of the individual and confer certain rights and duties upon the State.

The State should be strong and independent. Defence of the Republic is one with the national defence, forming a bloc. France should herself assure her security, but French strength is made up of several component parts of which the principal are: the widest degree of work, development of economic activity, financial equilibrium. Daladier was among the first in pressing home these truths. At the same

time, he never dodged the stiffest political battles all over the country, thereby becoming known, though haranguing is not a strong point and eloquence less so. 'Dala' was most at home then, as he still is, studying, reflecting, planning, organizing. There is no doubt about one source of his inspiration: Vauban. In *Défense du Pays*, published at the height of 1939 crisis, he pays tribute to the great fortifier in a manner leaving no doubt who is the author's ideal; indeed, there peeps out more than a hint of Daladier and his own work:

'Of all men of the XVIIth century, Vauban is perhaps the closest to us.

'Man of the soil and of the people of France, man of science, man of security, he bore in him three anxieties and three strengths which are still the anxieties and strengths of our country.

'Until seventeen, he remains in his (Morvan) village, familiar associate of the peasants and small people. He shall never forget these first ties and friendships. As King's Engineer, as Lieutenant-General of the Armies, as Marshal of France, he will find under his orders, as miners, as surveyors, as geometricians, these men of the soil. He will always defend them with energy, stand up for them, treat them with humanity and goodness.

'Thus, by heart and character, by a simple humanity, direct, derived from frequenting the humble, Vauban is close to us. But he is also that in spirit. In the full unfolding of campaigns and battles, he evolves and applies in every respect that which we should today call the doctrine of skilful arming. For he is artilleryman, sapper, hydrographer, topographer, architect and strategist. His first care is to conduct the attack so that his men are exposed as little as possible. He protects them, even during their advance, by earthworks and retrenchments, but his great effort is to bolt the frontiers of France, to erect, on the natural confines of

his country, a barrier of forts capable of stopping the invader and of assuring Peace. When, carried away by his Engineer's victories, the King looks beyond the reasonable boundaries of France, Vauban checks the appetite for conquest, requests that the frontier shall have the solidity of reason and of logic, which is also that of justice.

' From the age of twenty-two Vauban's task is to capture towns and to organize their defence. Without rest, he ranges over France, from the Rhine to the Alps, from the Alps to the Pyrenees, from the Pyrenees to Flanders, from Flanders to Brittany. The slightest knoll of ground used in the defence of the territory is his affair. He strengthens all the existing fortresses, erects new ones; Maubeuge, Longwy, Thionville, Haguenau, Huningue, Kehl, Landau form a continuous barrier. In 1683 this barrier saves the nation.

' The simple summary of this career suffices to set forth the astonishing rhythm of labour, of battle, of premeditation, of anxiety, ceaselessly renewed. But in the middle of all his resounding feats of arms, what it is hard to recapture is the everyday labour, the daily care that this man had for France. Hear him, at the end of his days, speaking of himself: " I hope I shall be permitted to speak of myself for the first time in my life. I am now in my seventy-third year, burdened by fifty-two years of service and overburdened by fifty-six considerable sieges, and by almost forty years of continuous travel and visits, concerning the frontier positions, all of which has caused me much difficulty and fatigue, for there was neither summer nor winter for me." How to say more, how to put it better?

' Behind the warrior we here perceive something bigger. A man entirely devoted to his country, whose only passion, whose only *raison d'être*, is the service of this country. That which we shall name the Great Citizen dominates, with Vauban, the great captain. If during forty years he ranged France, " concerned with the frontier positions ", he learnt

more than any other to know and to love this country. Doubtless the experience became linked with his first impressions and first friendships of youth. He realizes that war is not an end and that the true grandeur of States is only founded in peace. But listen to him again: "It has seemed to me that one has never bothered enough in France about the small folk. These form as a result the most ruined and miserable portion of the kingdom. Yet it is this portion which is the most considerable in number and by virtue of the real and effective services it furnishes. It yields all the soldiers and sailors, a large number of officers, all the tradesmen and minor functionaries of the judiciary. It is this part of the population that exercises all the arts and crafts, which does all the commerce and manufacturing of the kingdom, which furnishes all the labourers and land workers, which minds and feeds the cattle, which sows the corn and harvests it, which tends the vines and makes the wine, and, to put things finally in a few words, which does all the big and little work of the country and the towns." How could one put things better, at this very hour, in referring to the people of France?

'Vauban is doubtless a loyal servant of the State and of the King, but he demands that the State shall serve the people. He is indignant against profiteers and prevaricators: "Fortune caused me to be born the poorest gentleman in France, but in recompense it honoured me with a sincere heart, so exempt from all forms of knavishness, that the mere thought of them horrifies." These sentiments carry Vauban beyond the habits of his time, and the duties of his condition, to occupy himself with political affairs. This Great Citizen meditates and puts in order a plan of reform, and in a logical manner enters into conflict, a century in advance, with that monarchy the service of which was the be-all of his life. He opens the debate that will conduct the French people to be its own sovereign power.'

Daladier first became War Minister not long after the death of André Maginot. The Maginot Line was then about two-thirds completed. It had been conceived by Paul Painlevé, the real scientific begetter. What Maginot did was to press for funds and push construction when he succeeded Painlevé at the War Ministry. No one wishes to detract from the huge, bon-vivant, ex-sergeant's aureole, but simple truth requires it to be said that political partisans gave his name exclusively to France's historic bastion, in the (realized) hope of extracting party capital thereby.

'They've given us a revolutionary!' echoed in the Rue Saint-Dominique when the newcomer took his chair. Years later there was not a man in the army, from the oldest marshal to the youngest private, who did not consider M. Daladier the best National Defence Minister the Third Republic had had. He, more than any other man, was responsible for bringing the army to the pitch of perfection of September 1939. And not only the army. One of the big things about this statesman is his ability to work in with Service heads. As chief of national defence, he has Admiral Darlan and General Vuillemin to deal with, as well as General Gamelin. With all three he gets on famously, the same as he does with his principal civil collaborators, who have stayed with him during each of his three premierships. The Daladier ministerial method promotes this. 'Behind the trash of traditional formulæ and of administrative dossiers, he has always sought out the reality and, once he has discovered it, has set himself to studying the reforms that appear to him the fairest and most useful. He has been limited by no prejudice, been swayed by no interest, self or other. He welcomes the most original solutions, the least classical ones. He suspects orthodoxy, but does not on that account mislay his critical faculty in presence of new suggestions.'

This statesman has long appealed as sound, tolerant, fair,



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sensible, untrammelled, go-ahead, practical. That is how the adjectives come spontaneously to one who has witnessed the same recent extremely difficult French decade as has their subject. When some new upheaval would interrupt the War Minister's period of office, one felt indignant. 'Why not leave the fellow at his job? The system's all wrong! Continuity is his strong point!'

When Mr Churchill thanks the Deity for the French Army, he can also thank Édouard Daladier. The great work may not be examined in any detail here. It has become a personal monument in the lifetime of its architect, who very quietly, come storm, come calm, reorganized, modernized, adapted and constructed, raising the military service term from one to two years, then unofficially to three, and launching a four-year plan costing over £100,000,000. The War Minister's work formed a long-sighted, coherent whole. Realizing that he could never create a French army quantitatively equal to Germany's, he set about compensating for this natural inferiority by concentration on the quality of the troops, and of their material. Hence, the policy of motorization conducting to a harmonious combination of speed, resistance and fire power. Hence, the measures taken to improve the cadres, to increase the number of specialists, develop the fortifications system, and ensure its highest technical preparedness. If M. Daladier did not build the Maginot Line, he presided over—shall we say?—its coming to life. Under him, fortress troops made their bow; filling perilous voids, he established from the North Sea to the Alps, and in Southern Tunisia, fortified systems capable of being held without delay by hardened effectives recruited on the spot. What I should perhaps say is that M. Daladier was the presiding engenderer of all this, for, of course, General Gamelin and others engendered too!

February 1934. With his army work in its precarious, opening stage, M. Daladier was pitched into the breach as

Premier for the second time, just when the combined movements of Royalists and Croix de Feu were to culminate in the infinitely perilous Place de la Concorde rioting that left twenty dead, and caused one side in France to hate the other, more bitterly, perhaps, than at any time since the Revolution itself. I watched that night from the roof of the Crillon upon which, of all places, a chambermaid was shot dead by a stray bullet; like most witnesses, I wish to forget it.

In this Europe suffering so much from 'strong men' it is perhaps to be appreciated that the former professor of history did not use 'strong' measures and in the name of an elected majority turn machine-guns on the thousands hysterically packing the Concorde, or fill the Champs-Élysées with tanks. Daladier was urged to do so and refused; nor was he responsible for the shooting that did occur. One can visualize how he must have suffered that night, with those very ex-combatants among whom he could claim place as courageous ex-captain, lured into forming the vanguard of the pro-Fascist mob; and lured into execrating his name, he, the very man who loathed all politics that led to unreasoning hatred, and who, next morning, was to demonstrate the fact by resigning 'so as to prevent any danger of bloodshed'.

At once the argument arose: was this the act of a strong man or a weak one?

Long since, the favourable view has prevailed, that the decision was far more that of a strong man than a weak one, for a weak one, and especially a vain one, would have sought to justify himself, thinking only of his personal position. Perhaps the best judgement of his actions and the man is that he is neither strong nor weak but wise and human, one who believes in the wisdom of the French people to correct their own errors. Belief that found ample justification four years after 'the Concorde', when M. Daladier returned as head of the Government to find all the anger and vituperation with which his name used to be greeted, dispersed,

vanished, and those who were the heroes of the crowd on that February day—de la Roque, Tardieu, Chiappe—sunk from public notice, and in at least one case, lucky that it should be no more.

Hitler had been rampaging for more than five years. He had lately taken Vienna. The balance of power on the Continent had become transformed in the four years' interval since 'the Concorde'. France's eastern alliances, as lavishly sustained as they had been badly managed by Paris, were pretty well dissolved. If Franco had not yet won, there was a strong chance that he would, and how a divided France had antagonized him. A future Pyrenean frontier to be defended, loomed ahead. As for transalpine attitude, the Fascists said what they liked about France, heaping scorn and vilification. And, now, here was Hitler again: this time obviously about to take a crack at the Czechs, using his Sudetens. What a painful 'tour of the horizon' that must have been, over which M. Lebrun presided that Spring day of 1938, marking Daladier's return. The Republic was beginning to feel nothing less than surrounded by intending assailants.

What about England even? Having played the fool for many years under MacDonald and Baldwin, what would she do under Chamberlain? Continue to temporize, now pro-Italian, now pro-German, now pro-French, but all the time insisting she was pro-nothing? That would no longer do. France must know where she stood. The 'perfidious Albion' school was no ignorable leavening. French Fascism endured puissantly beneath the surface. It would not need much—perhaps a British blunder or just too heavy a touch of attempted splendid isolation—for forces in France to coalesce and demand negotiations with the Axis. Historic animosities and pro-Fascist circles apart, the fear of being left high and dry by England was a live one.

The 'bull of the Camargue' decided to go straight across

to London. He knew his weakness. Also, his strength. French war production was sapped by the class struggle, but a first-rate army had come into being.

April 28 was show-down day at No. 10. In a delicate atmosphere, Mr Chamberlain and Lord Halifax, MM. Daladier and Bonnet drew up their chairs: delicate, because the visitors knew how difficult it would be to persuade the British to take a greater responsibility on the Continent; failing which, in peace or war, Germany would swiftly establish an irresistible hegemony. Daladier spoke little on the opening day. He prefers first to listen to the other fellows, study them. But when on the second morning Lord Halifax took up the Czech question, he opened out. Simply, without phrases, by an initial relation of facts, then by strategic, economic and diplomatic arguments, he pointed to the perils of inertia. No futile sentimentality, no fine periods, which never did impress *les Anglais*.

The effect was to cause Mr Chamberlain to reflect, and present rebutting arguments. The Frenchman showed himself prepared, although an emotion steadily gained him. If holding to convincing facts, the Deputy of Orange now spoke just a little as had he 'the Wall of Orange' behind him—not a portrait of Chatham—that Roman survival in front of which so much Midi rhetoric has flowed. And did the change-over tip the scales? At any rate, Mr Chamberlain suspended the talk, to reopen it with an engagement to intervene in Central Europe.

In subsequent times one freely heard that M. Daladier was being towed by Britain, taking no initiative. The answer to that was concise. 'Why should France assert herself if the British are at last doing what we have so long advocated?' Besides, giving full rein to the Foreign Office had the advantage of reducing before Europe the Quai d'Orsay's responsibility for what befell. As opposed to taking the lead, M. Daladier saw that his main job was to keep *Angleterre* up

to the mark, keep on at her, and with special reference to bringing about conscription in the United Kingdom, since the French people would not stomach an indefinite continuance of the voluntary principle there.

The French will be 'heard from' when and if they are on the winning side in this war, in which event we would do well to bear in mind how much we needed them. Every Frenchman I have met has decisive ideas about a non-repetition by Britain of certain aspects connected with Versailles. It is certain that should M. Daladier be on top, these decisive opinions held by his French will be respected with a greater efficacy than Clémenceau contrived.

In 1938 neither the time nor the conditions for hammering away at England had yet arrived. France was herself at her lowest point. Fear, idleness, party passion, stalked. Despondency was abroad. France was an old land and might as well become reconciled to the fact. Defeatism of an unpleasant and decidedly non-altruistic kind was rife. When 'Munich' befell, this was the nation Daladier left behind as he flew high across the Rhine, himself still regarded as the competent and well-intentioned shoulderer of a load of trouble. Thirty-six hours later, he was to encircle twice a Le Bourget that had never known such a multitude. He had flown himself into becoming a national character, the first in France.

Journeys of this historic magnitude are rare. Let us accompany Daladier through the agency of his pilot, Gaston Durmon, who had flown the equivalent of forty-five times round the earth before lifting into the air, that September 29, his Bloch 220 *Poitou*:

'M. Daladier was obviously worried and tired when he took his seat with his collaborators, MM. Rochat, Clapier, Léger and Captain Roeland. A bad fog made ceiling below 500 feet. We climbed to 10,000 feet and flew between two layers of cloud as far as Strasbourg without seeing the earth.

M. Daladier had been reading numerous newspapers. We alighted at Munich after a journey of 2 hours and 20 minutes, at 11.15 a.m. The airport was magnificently decorated with the French, German and English flags, and, as he passed in review an impeccable guard of honour, the President of the Council was more moved than he wished to show. Then he got into a car with M. de Ribbentrop, and for five kilometres there ensued an unforgettable ovation.

‘As for ourselves, we were taken care of, together with the crew of Mr Chamberlain’s plane, by the management of the Rheinischerhof, and at a harvest celebration orchestras played French and British airs, and the utmost cordiality reigned. Any number of Germans came up to me to say how much they hoped peace would always continue between our two countries. When, towards 1 a.m., the news circulated that negotiations between the four statesmen were developing very favourably, the cordiality shot up several degrees more! Meanwhile, the whole population of Munich seemed to be spending the night in the streets, and as Hitler motored by at 2.15 a.m. taking Mussolini to the station, the crowd became delirious.

‘We were warned for 10.30 a.m. but M. Daladier, who did not retire until 4 a.m., postponed his departure until 1.30 p.m. From his hotel to the airport, a countless public acclaimed him in a way I have seldom heard. The cries of “Vive la France!” and “Vive Daladier!” reached their climax round the aerodrome, and when M. Daladier advanced to his aeroplane, a formidable final ovation greeted him. Tired and labouring under a profound emotion, he waved farewell.

‘Ceiling was 350 feet that day, and the weather worse. We flew at 8,000 feet and only saw the ground again at Nancy. M. Daladier, who had reacted almost to gaiety at the start, was taking a rest when the messages of congratula-

tion began to arrive. They continued until Le Bourget, where a memorable scene was spread out below. The great airport was black with people, the Flanders Road lined with cars for several kilometres. I made a tour of honour while the President of the Council looked down with fixed attention. Certainly he never expected this, and he told me to circle again. Then it was the landing,—and you know the rest! ’

Alas! ‘ Munich ’ immediately began to evaporate, because Chamberlain and Daladier would go on arming, and it turned out a dismal autumn for the hero of Le Bourget. The moral condition of France had, if possible, sunk lower still by the time von Ribbentrop was pleased to sign some pact or other, in Paris. Yet that December Daladier’s personal tide began to turn, to flow, even if his majority did sink to seven. You can envisage, against a background of the curious French people, three distinct dates as essentially formative of Daladier as Chief. First, the abortive general strike of November 30 gave him the chance of refuting the charge of timidity previously levelled at him, and he seized this with both hands. Second, the cries of ‘ Tunisia! Corsica! Nice! ’ raised by Italian Deputies, may have caused only irritated amusement, but after a moment’s thought the mere fact that such claims had been voiced at all came as a shock. Could French prestige really have fallen this low? M. Daladier was quick to appreciate things, and to make a fruitful decision. He would go to Corsica and Tunis and see for himself what the population had to say there!

It was a famous journey. Lasting but eight days, Paris to Paris, and taking in Algeria, a hundred special correspondents caused it to reverberate round the earth; by it a halt was called to fantastic cries, and its central figure came to be regarded as *un chef*. The French permit themselves very few *chefs*. Clémenceau was one, Poincaré a half-accepted second.

Guided by Navy Minister Campinchi, a local, through

a Corsica throbbing to endless *Marseillaises*, M. Daladier came upon the unforgettable thing in Tunis, where he spent only sixty hours (including a few for sleep), but such hours! Fixed in memory shall remain the landing at Bizerta. We correspondents had left Tunis, fifty miles away, in five big motor-coaches, and the light cruiser *Foch* was slowing down by the quays in a blaze of African dawn, when we scampered to the jetty. In the stern of a naval pinnace one caught sight of a short, plumpish man, dressed darkly and in black Homburg hat. As he greeted two score local dignitaries, one noticed how much better he was than his pictures—including fine blue eyes and a healthy pinkish complexion. One studied, in a group, four of the six Frenchmen to figure in this book, for General Georges, Admiral Darlan, and Air-General Vuillemin, had preceded their chief ashore.

A salute was fired, a native band played the *Marseillaise* and the Beylical Hymn, and so away for a morning of coastal defences and the Bey in his Bardo Palace. The whole thing had lasted barely five minutes. Yet what a drop-scene of history was discernible behind it. Hither had come France's ruling statesman to take up the challenge, '*delenda est Francia*', on this storied territory of Carthage itself.

Or take the broad Avenue Jules Ferry, running through the centre of Tunis, later that day. The great Avenue was wedged solid with a hundred and twenty thousand people, and as their hero came in sight this humanity broke the police and troop cordons and surged forward, along one-and-a-half miles, leaving scarcely a width of three yards for the car procession to pass. Nor had one heard perhaps since *Foch*, in London, twenty years before, such surge of heart-felt cheering. From whom? From French, Muslims, Jews, Maltese, Mediterraneans of every kind. A host of local Italians would have liked to join in, but in that multitude were hundreds of Fascist Party observers. The fervour attained its climax when forty thousand roared the *Mar-*

seillaise in Residency Square. Another scene, there, is imprinted: Daladier taking a few steps towards that immense crowd and, tears in his eyes, extending his arms in its direction. In the afternoon, his car made one kilometre an hour, heading for the stand of honour at a military review.

We travelled three hundred miles south to the Mareth Line, confronting Libya, and which was first sanctioned by Daladier. Banquets, galas, tears of joy. At Sousse, Sfax, El Djemm, it was Tunis repeated on a smaller scale. Said a Foreign Legion officer at Sousse: 'It must be the biggest personal success since Clémenceau.' 'A plebiscite of the heart' cabled American colleagues among 137,000 words wired from desert-edged Gabès. That was the night of the review behind the Mareth Line, twenty thousand 'real Africa' as on the films. Only, as we advised the G.O.C., he had beaten Hollywood hollow for setting. 'I chose it myself with care,' chuckled that wiry, hard-bitten little cavalryman. One thought anew: what artists can these French be.

Observing M. Daladier from day to day: he likes to dig out the facts for himself, to go direct to source—as to these defences. He detests wasting time, and holds to sticking single-mindedly to the job on hand. He will agree only to indispensable meetings, and he renounces pointless speeches, confining himself to such as have immediate reality. He made but one set speech in North Africa, and what really brought the French, at home, to a height of enthusiasm long mislaid, was the very fervour of distant Mediterranean 'members of the French family' as this came incessantly over the radio. M. Daladier is not built for swaying audiences by verbal flight. He has had, clearly, to teach himself to speak publicly. The vehemence, the gestures, do not come naturally. The fact is, this man puts reason before passion all the time. But he is an efficacious orator in the sense that he furnishes arguments that hit the mark. He

essays to render his 'demonstration' attractive by an easy imagery, a touch of irony, occasional ardour, yet the aim of a Daladier speech is to convince by evidence, by statistics and quotations, by painstaking refutation of the adversary's argument. Striking periods occur, but seldom. As when he adopted Michelet's France 'as a person' composed of men who 'from the humblest to the most illustrious, from peasant to poet, desire labour in peace and dignity amid justice'; or the 'I will maintain' speech at Orange, on his return from Africa: 'I will maintain France and the Empire. I will maintain discipline and labour in the nation.'

The French were now making up their minds that somebody essential to them had arrived, somebody 'different', they were commencing to swallow decree laws in bulk, to regard government by authority, and to a subdued if not absent Chamber, as desirable. Yet it needed a third date to raise Daladier unmistakably to the status of *Grand Chef*. The destruction of Czech independence awoke in the French the dire need for a common sacrifice. The ranks of party and of class must be closed. They were; and behind one man, Édouard Daladier who, two months after the swastika had been hoisted on the Hradshin, was able to say: 'France is a vast workshop where millions of men are working without pause or respite to ensure the national defence.' Gone, the too precipitate forty-hour week that he had never relished. Sixty and even seventy hours a week now.

In the months and weeks leading up to the war, M. Daladier came to preside over the nation in an authoritarian form that was divorced from dictatorship by its emphatic '*salut public*' spirit. His goal had long been 'to cover all the interests of France'. He was on his way. On the very eve of war, he put through by decree law his revolutionary Family Code, aimed at preserving the French people.

'A Daladier in Slippers', an intimate friend of his told me, 'would not be a success. He does nothing to seduce

the biographers. The basis of his work is a constant note-taking, from dossiers, that he reserves strictly for himself. He was ten years in office before he agreed that the furniture of his bureau was decidedly not up to the standard of a Minister of National Defence. His one distraction is reading, though we are trying to woo him with yachting. He never circulates socially save when he absolutely must. His tastes are of the simplest. He rolls his own cigarettes *ordinaires*, being rarely without one, and takes some interest in Provençal cooking. Occasional relaxation—in time of peace—may be an evening at a literary café, over a menu of *choucroute garnie* and one or two light beers.'

True enough, there is a paucity of 'human story' material. One has to contemplate this Leader, democratic brand, without frills of that kind, purely and simply as a case of baker's boy to Premier, National Defence Minister embracing land, sea and air, Foreign Minister, and Minister of War, collection of portfolios unique in modern France and coming near the Duce's own.

The French fully appreciate how lucky they were to find their man before war broke out, thereby being saved a debilitating and freely perilous war-time search, such as endured for more than three years a generation ago. Yet a portrait of Daladier without Paul Reynaud would be false. The financial and economic 'redressement' or pulling together, encompassed by the second, was vital to Daladier's rise to the undisputed top. Two other collaborators, Dautry of armaments, and Mandel of the Colonies, complete the French civilian 'Big Four', operating beside a uniformed quartette fully noticed hereafter. But 'Mickey Mouse' Paul Reynaud, individualistic Deputy for the smart Parc Monceau quarter of Paris, requires full recognition here. His will be a distinctive part in the victory, if such it is to be.

This merry and bright little meridional soul stepped into

the breach at the darkest post-Munich hour with a Three Year Plan that made people smile yet which, inside of a year, doubled the gold holding of the Bank of France by attracting back fifty billion francs of capital that had been sent abroad, the return of the prodigal making the country 'feel good' and giving renewed confidence to business and industry: prelude to general recovery (naturally, due greatly to armaments) that was swiftly to follow. 'Miraculous' was the epithet used when in mid-1939 the full nature of the national revival became apparent: spiritual, moral, political, social. Without diminutive Paul Reynaud of the friendly grin and steel-grey eyes and sartorial debonairness, it could not have come about. Nor was there any miracle about it, to him. For years he had been the French Cassandra, if his prophecies mostly touched another field to Churchill's. Unable to digest the optimistic twaddle of a Tardieu of Prosperity, he set out to paddle his own canoe.

'You have destroyed a cathedral!' he told the *rentiers* who, in political fright or prejudice, caused one collapse of the franc by exporting their wealth. He shocked even more by urging a further devaluation 'but executed without pressure, according to a prearranged plan, not when you are pitched into it!' To the workers on the eve of the general strike: 'I will make you strong.' To the *patronat*: 'I make France safe for capitalists. I do not forbid them to go elsewhere.' The forty-hour week he characterized as 'the Two Sunday Week'. The State, as 'a spending Santa Claus'. There had been created 240,000 new officials in two years. The intense fiscal weakness was due to 'a far-flung social programme plus armaments'. The public works programme must stop, and Lloyd George was wrong when he said that it was better to pay a man to work than to support a workless man. That the big employers should not accuse the workers of being responsible for the crisis in production when it was partly a case of factory machinery lying idle,

by order of the owners; that ' it is useless to prepare for war without the total concurrence of the working masses ', were other home truths from this possessor of a candid, rational mind, who never waits on public opinion but tilts at it.

Seventeen years ago his was almost a voice in the wilderness that urged acceptance of Rathenau's scheme to rebuild the devastated French departments with German materials and labour; at the end of the twenties he went to Berlin to fix a deal with Arnold Rechberg, and came back strongly advocating a rapprochement with the Weimar Republic while there was yet time. The sterile, implacable and unintelligent ' No ' of the Poincarists exasperated this unashamed and unafraid facer of facts, whose motto is ' Know, Understand, Act '.

Until the decree laws of 1938-9 people refused to take Paul Reynaud seriously. He was such an amusing little fellow! Such a social lion, too. The joy of Cannes and of Deauville. And rich, and married to a daughter of the famed Maître Henri-Robert, defender of Dreyfus. Even if ' Mickey ' did hold such weird and emphatic opinions, what did it matter? He was a lone wolf, hardly belonged to any party. Himself against group loyalties, an outsider in the Palais Bourbon ' republic of good fellows ', the groups would take good care that this little Jacobin fighter got nowhere.

Those who reckoned that way failed to take into account their subject's dynamic side or the old story of immense industry and will-power in a small body. Paul Reynaud hails from the highest town in France, Barcelonnette, and his High Alps stock had intermarried with Spain. Spanish blood, Midi verve. By some strange turn bourgeois Barcelonnette owns most of the department stores in Mexico, and Paul Reynaud need never have practised law, nor turned journalist, nor politician. He just felt impelled that way. Of a very superior intelligence, gifted with an

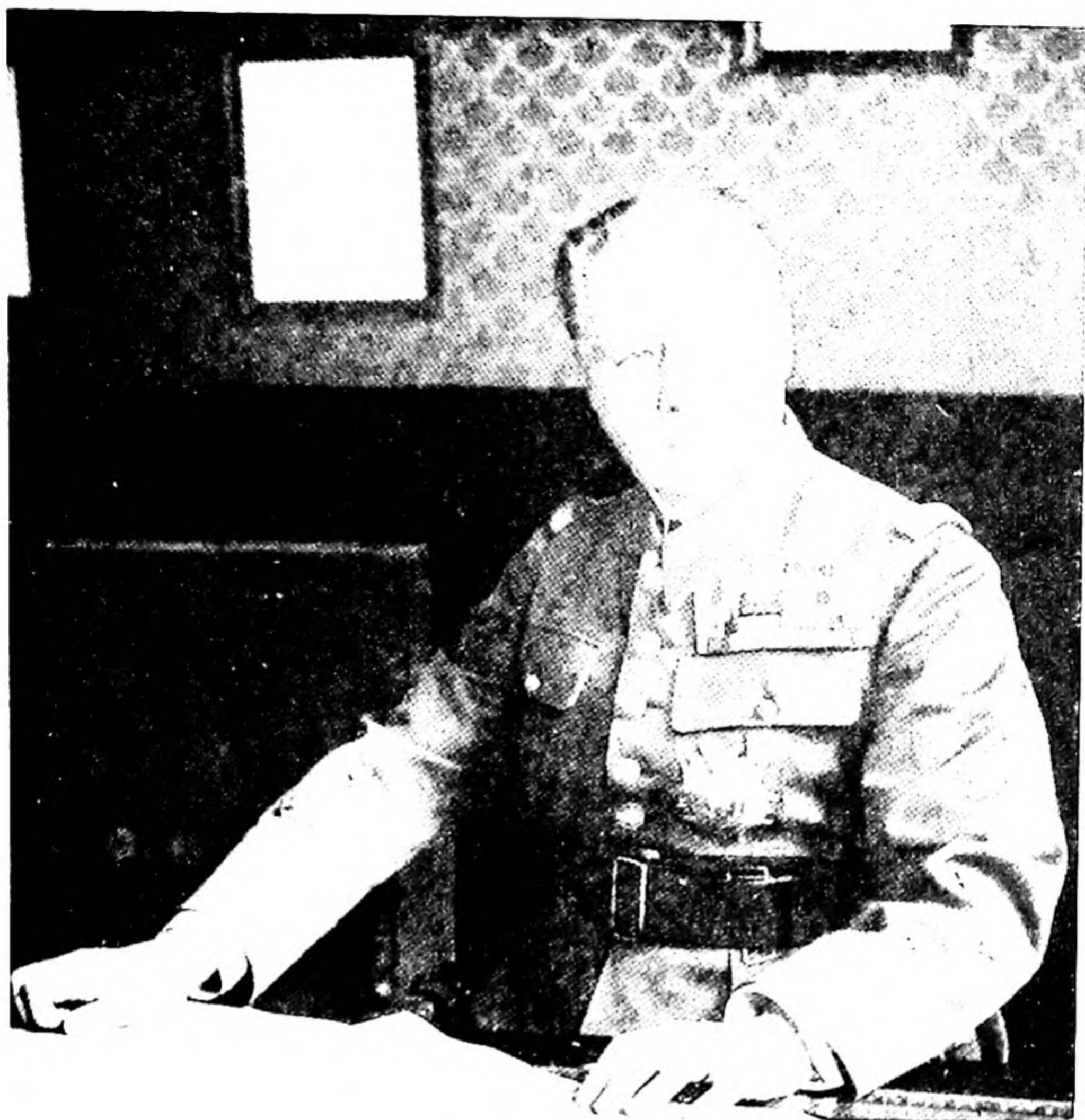
incisive insight, he was quite ready to follow his own head, when the time arrived, and to take the consequences. A great globe-trotter, he took the Ministry of the Colonies in order to see more of the world, and was twice Minister of Justice, but all the time his eyes were fixed on the chair once occupied by the fabled Baron Louis, in the rue de Rivoli. Finance! It required a Daladier to set him there, a leader to whom he is complementary in one or two ways.

Of domineering temper, M. Paul Reynaud has the taste for power but realizes he could never hope to muster sufficient backing in the Chamber, except in an emergency. He has remained too long and glaringly outside that 'republic of good fellows'. So he is content to put his shoulder to the wheel without stint in the cause of the '*salut public*' Administration. Paris calls him '*l'homme du jour*', and freely you hear 'Mickey' spoken of as highly as the Chief himself. 'Mickey' is content as long as he is allowed to run his own show—for which read that he has turned the Finance Ministry into the planning centre of French reconstruction, and is for ever pushing the Government into new fields. Of such creative energy is this innovator, that he must jot down notes—passing thoughts—everywhere, on menus, on backs of envelopes. Later, these scribblings, with emendations and corrections, are committed to foolscap pages in handsome, strong handwriting.

Paul Reynaud has complete confidence in himself, and is a marvel at making the public share his personal sentiments over the radio. He does not get it all out of his own head, but maintains a personal cabinet of a few brilliant men. Among them was the banker-economist Istel, but Istel decided the Finance Minister was growing too conservative. That made 'Mickey's' grin wider than usual.

Daladier and Paul Reynaud. When these differing sons of the Midi, grave and withdrawn, sparkling and social,

come to have their monuments in Carpentras and Barcelonnette, the orators of the respective unveilings would do well to mention them in association, for that is how the France of their time regards them: as the two men who with no delay adequately took up the challenge that France was ranged beyond cure or even palliative by class schism, decadence and senility.



GENERAL GAMLIN.

CHAPTER THREE

GENERALISSIMO

IT IS CUSTOMARY, WHEN THEY ARE OF YOUR SIDE, TO PRAISE military leaders until they fail, to excavate every sort of thing in their favour. When the fall comes, such writings fade with their subject and, anyway, there will be those to contend that however unjustifiably rosy or far-fetched some of them may have been, they were necessary in order to help along civil morale and to sustain that of the troops.

Meanwhile, legends almost of infallibility result from the temporary hero-worship.

If this was not a good thing in the past—witness the shock of Nivelle's nose-dive—it is clearly less of a good thing now, with the warring peoples themselves so much more closely wrapped in the actual conflict of arms. The case of Nivelle is worth a moment. Here was a high officer who, on December 16, 1916, had carried out a splendidly conceived limited operation at Verdun, one which ended that terrible campaign on a note of thrilling French victory. Essentially, Nivelle had lost so relatively few men.

That started the legend. Here, at last, the Allies had found a man who had the wit to put a term to the shocking slaughter of the war of attrition. Through early 1917 Nivelle's astonishing capabilities were sung by the politicians in Paris. They even mused how wonderful it would be when this half-Briton could converse with 'Lloyd George' in that dynamic soul's own language. So what was to befall, befell. The great discovery was made commander-in-chief for the Aisne offensive that was to coincide with Allenby's Arras assault, and Nivelle was allowed to do what he liked by way of preparation, strategy and tactics.

If it be true that the disaster that resulted was closely associated with the action of deserters in going over to the German lines with comprehensive plans and knowledge, at once the challenge arises: *why* had men so near the enemy

been placed in possession of such tremendous knowledge? The answer lay inherently in Nivelle's new methods, by one turn of which the attacking divisions were to be more closely acquainted with plans and with ways and means, a greater effort was to be obtained from officers, N.C.O.'s and men, by taking them into the confidence of the general staff.

The collapse of Nivelle, more particularly, of his legend, led to nothing short of the infinitely perilous mutineering in the French forces, that occurred precisely when Britain had reached what was to be her own nadir with the high point of the U-boat sinkings.

It does not pay to construct 'colourful' pictures of soldiers at the expense of the truth. Most big soldiers are not colourful characters but serious students of their job. If, therefore, it is the fashion to call General Gamelin colourless, perhaps it is as well so, since the record shows that the French nation suffers when its leading soldiers give off fireworks. The Army is labelled '*la grande Muette*', to signify that it should not mix in politics or in public life, even as the professional soldier may not vote, and there certainly has not been for a long time so mute a member of the High Command as its present head. One benign effect is the absence of a Gamelin legend. The public perfectly well understands that had this war been delayed much longer, General Gamelin would have passed to the retired list in the normal manner, to be succeeded by a younger man, and that on this unknown officer would have devolved the onus and the aureole of Generalissimo. That Gamelin is the representative of a brilliant upper crust of the French military caste, rather than an isolated genius, is the sounder way to envisage matters. It might be correct to say that every Frenchman would be profoundly surprised if the General failed; and that is all, a prime reason for such faith residing in the straightforward story of this soldier, his record, character, temperament, seemingly unavoidable

rise, there for all to examine, without frills or flutterings. The last war was a great forger of men, and it forged this soldier openly, understandably.

Let us carry along with us three impressions to the end of the chapter: they may light up the unfolding of a career. What the Generalissimo looks like. What type of a man he is, vocation apart. And how he comes before his staff.

More than once in recent years I chanced to see an impeccably dressed, quick and short-stepping little Frenchman emerging from No. 4 bis Boulevard des Invalides, most historic of modern military bureaux. Here, Foch worked, and Pétain, and Weygand, when each headed the French Army; here has been done much of the chief brain work of this war, in an office dominated by a golden dome for ever honouring Napoleon, since whom none has achieved such embracing military eminence as the present Generalissimo.

Gamelin is five feet four, trim and stocky. His unaltering civilian attire is a blue lounge suit. He is sixty-seven but looks in the late fifties. You would think, passing by, 'what a neat, well-preserved and smart Parisian'. Had you the occasion to look closer, you would note the tightly closed lips beneath the small 'toothbrush' moustache which in past war days used to be flourishing French: as if its owner had trimmed it down as his own life became less of a flourish and more of the business office. You would note the absence of wrinkles, the hair that might be greyer than it is. The feature arresting attention would be the eyes, of a remarkably clear blue. When painting the General, in 1936, the portraitist Brisgand could not place them. Finally he decided 'they are eyes that wait, expectant eyes that can be gentle or glacial'.

The General remained a bachelor until fifty-five, when he married a Breton lady. There is no family. Madame la Générale receives in a third-floor flat overlooking the Avenue Foch (formerly Bois de Boulogne). She has accom-

panied her husband on several of his visits to foreign manœuvres. In 1938, General and Madame Gamelin, plus a chauffeur, got as far north as Scotland. Even generalissimos are not paid abundantly, and the Gamelins have no country place. It is doubtful if one would serve much use, as this soldier is entirely satisfied (in normal times) with his work, with reading, and with such social occasions as Mme la Générale deems will not go against the grain. An occasional *soirée*; the opera; old-time music.

A deal is included in the sentence spoken by an intimate: 'The General's life has been correct and composed and based on Pascal's *bien penser*.' This high officer will attend functions meticulously but can do just as well without them. He has few close friends, but they include Marshal Badoglio. Whether he 'drinks' or smokes, I do not know, and I rarely believe what is related of the habits of the great in such twin regard. Teetotallers on top frighten me, and I like to think that General Gamelin is a *fin gourmet* and so must take his wine. Tobacco may also be a good thing for men who have to think and avoid loss of nervous energy in worrying or annoying circumstances. Ironside and Darlan are seldom without pipes. But a discussion on these lines could lead anywhere.

General Gamelin was a great horseman, one reason he loved his long sojourn in South America. But his exercise now is mostly walking. As a man, then, he is first and foremost an intellectual. Pencil ever in hand, he has read prodigiously all his life, especially philosophy and the stories of civilizations and peoples. He used to try Bergson on 'Pappa' Joffre, but that did not go so well. As a fact, in allowing himself to be attracted by the Bergsonian theory of sensation and intuitive introspection, he was departing from his own type which is the Cartesian.

In day-to-day dealings with his staff and with other soldiers, the Generalissimo observes a 'benevolent form-

ality', which sounds a trifle distant, and is so. For publicity purposes he needs humanizing. It would be idle to put it down solely to the thinker, most at ease with his books in the serenity and detachment of his study. For a Frenchman, General Gamelin lacks warmth—but, then, does he not derive from Fleming stock? A man of the North-cum-East (his mother being of Lorraine). Here is a soldier of no unnecessary words. Not taciturn. He can and does open out when he chooses. Yet that is the exception in the routine of daily affairs. Rather does he then incline to be monosyllabic. 'No.' 'Yes.' 'To be considered.' Three files or questions submitted, will be dealt with in those five words.

The General does not encourage his aides to intrude their ideas, but is ready to accept, in his own phrase, 'opinions respectfully expressed'. On five points, he is adamant. He must not be let down by a subordinate. Obedience shall be absolute. The faintest absence of probity shall be fatal. Any form of flattery, of him or anyone else, is detestable. And those who waste time are some of the few people who really annoy him. Add to this 'a comical horror of the theatrical', and the military chief begins to take form. Dry, strict, exacting. But always fair. If he can blame vehemently, so does he see that credit goes where it is due.

It helps overcome the formality that an exceptional memory enables Gamelin to address by name every regular officer in the French army down to the rank of colonel, and many below it. To such officers as merit it, he gives his confidence, but these must be prepared for brusque changes of mind, never explained, which spring from lengthy pondering alone. The General never seems to order, rather to advise, as if going out of his way to persuade. 'To know is not enough. One must radiate.' Even in closest discussion he never raises his voice. The coolest brain belongs to this trim little soldier. 'It is no use getting angry with things.

It is a matter of indifference to them.' Self-control! Once, in expansive mood, he gave this recipe for gaining power over others: 'Do not exhibit to those about you your worries of mind and heart. In the decisive hour, the faintest word of doubt can kill in subordinates their faith in success. In danger, difficulties, suffering, never show any sign before your subordinates. From him who masters his own nature, emanates a force that gestures, acts, the spoken word, one's look, exteriorize: such a one is rapidly affirmed as the designated guide of those who do not possess the same power.'

I have made use of the words 'seemingly unavoidable rise', yet that is to omit our old friends the imponderables. But for a chance occurrence on a day in October, 1906, Gamelin's career could never have taken the course it did. On that day a Colonel Joffre met a Lt.-Colonel Foch, and said the former to the latter (approximately): 'You've doubtless heard they've given me command of the Sixth Division. I've had no experience of staff work. I must have, in particular, an orderly officer with brains. Can you recommend anyone?' The Professor of History and Tactics at the War Academy reflected, then remembered a young officer he had passed out with the mention 'very good'. 'Take Captain Gamelin,' he counselled. 'At present with the 15th Chasseurs in the Vosges. One of the very first!'

Remarked Joffre, upon his selecting Foch's tip among three candidates: 'My boy, you've done well for yourself!' But so, too, had Joffre:

'Henceforward, in peace, in the preparation of war, and in war, Joffre was to have a most devoted right-hand man, and a counsellor who was discreet, frank and reliable. Through a thousand vicissitudes Gamelin was to preserve the confidence and affection of Joffre. For ten years the two were together, save in 1913-14 when Major Gamelin commanded the 11th Chasseurs.'

Captain Gamelin was thirty-four when chance banged at his billet door in the Vosges. What had those preceding years held, promised?

Few boyhoods can have been more saturated by 'army'. Gustave Maurice Marie was born in the Boulevard St Germain, not many blocks from the War Ministry. As soon as he could stand up, his mother painted him beating a military drum. Presently, the little fellow had the reputed best collection of lead soldiers in all Paris. For stories, he would pass from one soldier's knee to a second, as his grandfather, last Governor of Strasbourg, and his father, Comptroller of the Army, told of the Crimea, of Solferino, and, endlessly of the great *Épopée*. Since the reign of Louis XV there had been five generals in the Gamelin family. Young Maurice inherited the spirit of command, for at ten he was ordering about at games boys five years older than himself. This was at the strict Stanislas College, Montparnasse, and two professors of that day, who lived to be 'Immortals' of the Academy, have testified to the future Generalissimo's school abilities. 'He could have been a professor of history' says Cardinal Baudrillart. 'Or have developed into a good writer' recorded René Doumic. The boy's mother wanted her second son to be a painter. He had talent, and she spent long hours encouraging this. The father wished Maurice to be an engineer.

Stand-offish and not exactly popular, young Gamelin would discuss his future with one close friend. Hands clasped behind his back, favoured attitude rather formidable in a child, Maurice would repeat: '*Et pourtant j'aimerais tant faire "Cyr"!*' He would so much like to go to the famous Military Academy. In 1891, he was to have his way.

Two years later, a hush-hush *pari mutuel* gave Cadet Gamelin as a four to one chance for qualifying No. 1 at the annual 'Triumph'. Such a certainty had never been heard of, but its subject made no mistake, romping home six clear

lengths—points—ahead of the next fellow. A superlative memory chiefly accounted for that. It remains the General's quiet wager that he can quote every one of Napoleon's orders, to whom each was given, and on what occasion.

St Cyr! No other country has anything like it. You need a land like France, drenched with the glory of arms, to produce a 'Triumph', such burning dedication and binding tie in after-life. Sandhurst or West Point never enfolded their cadets so clingingly as does their French counterpart.

It was all just the same as in Gamelin's day, one afternoon of July 1939, with, maybe, an added note in the mingled pageantry, solemnity, pride, tears, as the company, that recalled Eton *v.* Harrow at Lord's but with fathers and uncles in uniform, watched the annual Promotion. Here were the two hundred best cadets about to be given their Commissions. And here France stood apparently on the threshold of war! Fathers, mothers, sisters and sweethearts could not banish from their minds a former Promotion, and the event that so swiftly followed it. Supposing these 1939 youths, so wonderfully fit in the summer sunshine, were to meet with a similar fate?

Each year the Promotion is given an apt designation. Nineteen-thirty-nine's was 'Greater France', in harmony with M. Daladier's Empire policy. Nineteen-fourteen's was 'The Cross of the Legion of Honour', which had just been bestowed upon the Academy's Colours. But that 'Triumph' never took place. The outbreak of war intervened. Yet the more ardent spirits would not be foiled. They organized a celebration of their own, and in a sort of delirium of patriotic fervour a mad oath was taken by a score of ringleaders, that they would advance to the first assault wearing the traditional white gloves of St Cyr. This was duly done—or at least by such covenanters as were engaged in the opening battle, for the madness was put a stop to in a flash. But on the day of Charleroi the

fatal white gloves were worn. And their wearers were relentlessly picked off by the enemy. All those *Cyrards* were killed, among them a de Castelnau and a Fayolle. It was indeed magnificent but *not* war, not anything but a fantastic example paid for a thousand times too dearly.

Before the war ended, 4,600 *Cyrards*—one in every two engaged—had fallen. A ‘tabernacle’ at St Cyr (which lies beyond Versailles) commemorates them, containing as many names inscribed in bronze. Resting on top of it, the white and red plumed *képi* and the white gloves as worn since the Academy’s foundation by Napoleon, in 1808, by over forty thousand young officers given to France. The principal figure at each successive ‘Triumph’ is a mounted Bonaparte surrounded by his staff—Lannes, Murat, Berthier, and others, all plainly recognizable. Come republic, come monarchy, come empire, the *Cyrards’* inspiration remains the little Corporal.

Today, thousands of them are at the front, officering all the regiments of France and her possessions, and if one thing is more certain than the next, it is that never in the past have the lives of *Cyrards* been so jealously protected as by the former head cadet of 1893.

There is ever a clamour to serve in Africa among qualifying cadets, and 2nd Lieut. Gamelin was no exception. Before the assembled company of a ‘Triumph’, a cadet calls out the regiment he desires to join and as far as possible, especially with the leading cadets, the Commandant there and then dramatically posts the applicant accordingly. Cadet Gamelin of course got his Algerian *Tirailleurs*, with whom he remained for the next three years in Algeria and Tunisia. The stage was important in one respect. The young officer spent most of his leisure time sketching and mapping the African landscape. Not only did he intend to preserve his talent (incidentally, comforting a slightly disappointed artist mother) but the military maps of the early ‘nineties

were such dead, inaccurate productions. Lieut. Gamelin first had the idea of livening them up with those little drawings that have long since become a commonplace—where there was a well, or an oasis, or a fort, he would sketch one in. He also startled local 'Maps' by daring to introduce colour, not to mention precision. Some time elapsed before seniors swallowed the new style; meanwhile, its creator decided to transfer to the Army Geographical Service, move fertile in effect.

Painting has remained the Gamelin *violon d'Ingres*, and much of his success as commander is attributed to a unique reading and use of ground that originated in his landscapist's instinct for geography. 'If we could be sure of a little peace for a while,' a rare recent anecdote quotes, 'I might get back to painting.' Hobby that has contributed to the Generalissimo's conserving of men, traceable to his taking a maximum advantage of the ground, and to the shrewdest disposition of fire power. If Gamelin, moreover, knows the border topography of France better than any other, including 'every road to the frontier', that is no less associable with what has proved a strikingly valuable hobby.

The general has never ceased adding to a rare and finely engraved collection of maps across whose sheets his fingers move almost caressingly. This mention of maps resuscitates a memory of lanky General Micheler's 10th Army headquarters, at Moreuil, in 1917. I was down *en mission*, with maps bearing strange markings, and the chief of staff thought he'd like to see what it was about. A very small but very neatly built officer, blue-eyed, still rather big moustached. Quiet, serious, precise. Inside a minute or two, he was nodding 'that can be useful'. And exit. Other, higher officers, either had failed to grasp the subject, or did not deign to. 'That's a good chap,' I irreverently mentioned to our liaison officer, 'who is he?' I did not then know that 'the chap's' pet study had to do precisely with maps,

nor that he had merely used his faculty for smoothly persuading others to 'do their stunts', usually undetected by such others, as distinct from requiring them to do so. Such has been a Gamelin foundation of success.

During 1899-1902 Lieut. Gamelin sat much of his time spellbound, at the War College, by a terrific Lt.-Colonel Foch then at the zenith of his professorial power. Foch took a liking to his intelligent pupil, whom he 'taught to think'.

Regimental duty was next indicated, interrupted by a period as staff captain, and then Joffre appeared on the scene.

In crucial pre-last-war years, Joffre could not do without 'the clarity and good sense, the sure judgement, the audacious intellect and ardent initiative of his young aide' who, in 1912, was appointed to the hub post of military secretary. At this time the French General Staff was establishing its Plan to counter the expected German onslaught. Major Gamelin continually pointed to the possibility and the probability of an invasion through Belgium, even as he long prepared for a repetition through the Low Countries in the present war. He made a special study and wrote out a defence of the through-Belgium attack, but for once 'Pappa' was seduced by other counsels.

When Gamelin was called to G.H.Q. in late August 1914, he was about the only one there who could say: 'What did I tell you?' but of course did not, with the Germans descending rapidly upon Paris; Dinant, Charleroi, and other heavy defeats in the first weeks.

One has to proceed carefully in apportioning personal credit in connection with the recovery that stood unperceived directly ahead, such has been the rivalry of claims. It is clear that on August 25, two opposing plans confronted Joffre. General Berthelot wished to retreat further and to attack the inside wing of the advancing German right. G.H.Q. 'Operations' favoured tackling the outside wing, and Major Gamelin's voice in this branch was already a leading one.

Joffre decided on the second solution, and Gamelin drew up historic Order No. 2 which at once produced the holding-up victory of Guise and was to lead, roundly, to the disposition of opposing forces that released the Battle of the Marne:

‘ Having been unable to carry out the offensive manœuvre originally planned, future operations will be conducted in such a way as to reconstruct on our left a force capable of resuming the offensive while the other armies hold the enemy in check for such time as may be necessary.’

From September 3 General Galliéni, in Paris, was tempted to do things on his own, having made the transcending discovery that Kluck was exposing his right flank. That day he was repeatedly on the telephone trying to get Joffre’s permission to attack, and it was the same on the 4th which was a day of doubt and hesitation at G.H.Q. ‘ In his dark chasseur uniform Major Gamelin crossed to the Operations section where officers were arguing over maps. He pointed out the opportunity on the map and urged an advance the next day. “ *Il faut les coiffer !* ” was his spirited summing-up. (“ We must trump them ! ”) Joffre entered and listened. Impressed, he went into conference with others who, however, remained sceptical, causing the General-in-Chief to temporize by enquiring of Galliéni what was the condition of the troops it was proposed to use to attack Kluck’s exposed flank ?’ The reply came moderately encouraging, but that night Galliéni returned pressingly to the telephone, with the result that Joffre issued his Order No. 6, drafted by Gamelin: ‘ It is desirable to take advantage of the exposed position of the German First Army. All dispositions will be taken during the day of Sept. 5th, with a view to launching an attack on the 6th.’ But the decisive battle of the Ourcq was to begin on the 5th, through French Moroccan troops unexpectedly coming in contact with Kluck’s cavalry and even with part of his reserve.

Promoted lieutenant-colonel, Gamelin was made chief of

the Operations Section, a post he held through unsatisfactory 1915. One does not see how he can be dissociated from the 'nibbling' policy of his chief. The truth is everyone was learning from the trench stalemate that had not figured in any textbook, the head of 'Operations' no less than the greenest subaltern. What is clear is that early in 1916 Col. Gamelin felt he required a change. A visit to the Isonzo front, with his chief, only confirmed this hankering: himself trained to mountain warfare, he was thrilled by the manner in which that first fine army of Italy's overcame difficulties and hardships. If he had to wait some months longer before Joffre would release him, when that day came, it was a good thing for Gamelin and for the French Army, though hardly for 'Pappa' who contrived to retain his post only a short while after his junior second half had taken his departure. 'One of my red blood-corpuscles' Joffre had called Gamelin, and, referring to the latter's philosophical bent that found expression in unalterable steadiness during which operated a swift and penetrating foresight, 'If this is philosophy, it is time all generals were philosophers'. Lincoln, it will be recalled, had had a like idea but in relation to whisky, when well-wishers told him Grant drank.

'I don't know what war is,' said the newly arrived Colonel of Alpine Chasseurs to the group of officers assembled to greet him at battalion H.Q. on the Lingekopf overlooking Colmar and the Rhine. 'I want you to show me it.' The teaching must have been as satisfactory as the assimilation, for inside of six months Gamelin was to earn this Sixth Army citation: 'Has made of his brigade a superb fighting instrument. Has exhibited highest qualities of method and of grasp in organizing the sectors he has occupied and of command in the victorious actions that have enabled him during the offensive to capture with a minimum of losses the whole enemy trench system that was his objective.'

‘ With a minimum of losses.’ The Gamelin of today had made his bow. Given his two stars of brigadier, at forty-four, he was not, however, really to find himself as fighting general until the summer of 1917, for just before quitting G.H.Q., Joffre summoned him back, while the first months of 1917 saw him chief of staff of Micheler’s 10th army. But in May he got the 9th Division, and it was to be a fine and gallant tale to the end. The 9th became known as ‘ the travelling division ’ because of its always appearing where things were hottest, where situations had to be retrieved, or gains exploited. ‘ Maximum effort, minimum breakages ’ would instil its chief. ‘ Above all, not an unnecessary death! Every man who falls will have to be paid for.’ Other characteristic remarks recaptured from this period are: ‘ *Agir n’est pas s’agiter* ’ (to act is not to get excited) and ‘ optimism is a luxury ’, while he constantly referred to ‘ *l’ennemi libre* ’, meant to imply that the opponent was mobile and unknown.

British people will always like to hear of the Gamelin of March 26, 1918. When our Fifth Army was overwhelmed in the fog, the famous 9th Division faced six packed German divisions on our right flank. Fighting on an expanding and contracting front, it fell back until the morning of the 26th when it was being caught in a vice. Its Commander had to decide immediately on one of two courses. That of prudence, which told him to break off the battle and retreat, even if the ‘ unhooking ’ must inevitably bring heavy losses. And that of daring: resist bitterly till nightfall with counter-attacks on both wings, and hope to make an easy withdrawal in the subsequent darkness. This would be risking annihilation, but General Gamelin did not hesitate. Moving his H.Q. to the front, he controlled the day’s resistance, and, prior to the retreat planned for the night, had neighbouring British general officers over to dine. One of them was later to say of their host of that dramatic dinner table: ‘ Very much all

there, is Mister Gamelin! ' Officially, praise came for ' the subtlety of his command, his clearness of vision, his spirit of decision, his personal courage, and his hold over his men '.

Gamelin's division assumed strange proportions in its journeyings, at one time coming to include a British cavalry division and the 32nd American. It was permanently swollen by ' leavings ' and finished on the Meuse with its braves grumbling: ' And Berlin? '

In 1919, General Gamelin went to Brazil for six whole years as head of a Military Mission. Waste of valuable years? French prestige stood in need of being accented in South America. The General foresaw a period of relative army stagnation at home. He also wished to digest the lessons of the war, while prosecuting further studies in other directions. Besides, could he not indulge to the full his joy of horsemanship in Brazil, even some farewell ski-ing? Always in the pink of condition, he rode and studied and trained his Brazilians away from a lingering German influence. A wealth of reading was done in those years, while there was occasion to learn Portuguese. The Gamelin who returned to subdue the Druse and calm down Syria, in 1925-8, was a mentally ripened man.

Thereafter, the 20th Corps, at Nancy, and in early 1931, elevation to Chief of the General Staff. The period had set in, with which we are still linked. In 1935 he succeeded Weygand as Generalissimo designate, and in 1938 was created Chief of the General Staff of National Defence, co-ordinating all three fighting services, and occupying a position unequalled since Napoleon himself. These creative, organizing years, Gamelin spent, according to his friends, ' between studying land operations in case of war, and inspecting all " arms and services " all over France and North Africa, intermingling frequent visits of enquiry and observation to foreign countries '.

The General was creating that which I shall hazard is the

Sixth French Army, as a distinctive type, to materialize in the past three centuries.

I take off with Louvois, who thought out and set afoot Europe's first regular army, destined to be led from triumph to triumph by Condé, Turenne, and Luxembourg. But unbroken success can breed sluggishness, and one detects French Army No. 2 in the host to suffer at the hands of Marlborough and Eugene—even if Berwick and Villars recaptured some leeway as the War of the Spanish Succession drew to a close.

The glorious Armies of the Revolution and of the Napoleonic *Épopée* stand out clearly, together with the transformation in strategic methods associated with them. It all ended in disaster, but it also ended in something else not so evident. Bonaparte seems not to have enhanced to any great extent the organization or the tactics of the army which during the fifty years succeeding Waterloo gathered moss on an already dusty surface. Came 1870 and French Army No. 4, and the bottom fell out of things. 'Ready to the last button,' said Marshal Le Boeuf. An army seething with an offensive urge that outstripped the Prussian, and, as the upshot proved, quite unschooled to sustain the defensive role inflicted on it after Sedan.

The French Army of 1914 nearly came to grief at the outset by persevering with the doctrine of the '*offensive à outrance*'. But the national common sense spoke before the evil took irreparable root, and the world witnessed during the next years an army adapting itself better to the new and swiftly changing conditions than did any other. One's opponent is a better judge than most, and a secret document signed Ludendorff, which came our way in the winter of 1917, set forth that the French were better in the attack and more skilful in the defence than the British who, however, could stay the course better. The French used ground in the attack just as well as they used it in defence; were equally

skilful in the tactical use of their artillery and of their infantry. In fact, the Germans grew to be most respectful of that fifthly materialized French army.

Now this sixth exemplar, twenty-five years after last curtain rise. An army, probably more lauded before the event than any in history. 'Lloyd George says French Army best in the world.' That kind of praise from most points of the compass.

An army is made up of many facets. Its higher officers and staff. Its officer corps and N.C.O. equivalent. Its career troops, cadres. Its reserve material. Its conscripted masses. Its training and equipment, leading to fire-power and mobility. Its temper. It is difficult to point where this present army was deficient when the summons came. On the eve of war I took a tour through France, to find that Prince William of Sweden's assessment, before I left Paris, was quite true. 'The Army is magnificently and rightly popular. Internationalism is far away, as also the strike frame of mind, and nobody any longer thinks of reducing the work of the nation. Under the external menace, the French nation has found again its entire unity, the consciousness of its historic prestige, of its ideals and of its duties.'

The great strength of the army lies in its officer corps and N.C.O. reservoir. Numbered in tens of thousands, on the active list and in the reserve, officers and N.C.O.'s were in peace-time continuously subjected to special training and stiff examinations. Sergeants vie in tactical and technical ability with subalterns, and many hundreds of the former qualify for commissions each year from the 'N.C.O.'s St Cyr' at St Maixent, Charente. This 'Sixth' French Army never mislaid the pronounced advantage it gained by not having to submit to disarmament in the decade after the Armistice. When most other armies were soft-pedalling, France's army was not. If Poincaré's refusal to contemplate the disarmament clauses of the Treaty conspicuously pro-

pelled Nazism, at least there was to be the consolation that France's army emerged sounder in leadership and training, in equipment, in temper and in limb, for its not having been dispersed and reduced to a militia status in the 1920's.

It was General Gamelin's good fortune to inherit a going concern. Yet he and M. Daladier saw that an immense amount required to be done by way of mechanization and equipment if the crude menace of *Mein Kampf* was to be foiled. With a lavish and priority hand, the pair equipped and strengthened right through an extremely difficult social period associated with French Fascism and with the ' Popular Front's ' too precipitate attempt to better working-class conditions.

As far as the country realized at the time, the General was not playing any decisive role in the recurrent major crises caused by Hitlerism, but that was short-sighted on the part of the public. Here we venture upon ground where General Gamelin has had his only serious critics thus far. The French High Command needs to be observed in dual capacity : as military advisers of the State, and as its military executants in war, having presided over the army's organization, equipment and training in time of peace. In France and foreign countries, nobody challenges the professional ability of the French military leaders. But nowadays it is not enough that these should have a complete grasp of tactics and strategy and know how to use with maximum efficiency the weapons and the men placed at their disposal. Something more is required of them. They must be able to form an accurate mental picture of the balance of military forces all over the Continent, they must be sufficiently competent and well informed to evolve for themselves an understanding of the universal situation.

Now, if this war can be stigmatized as the offspring of any one day, such is incontrovertibly March 7, 1936, when Hitler tip-toed into the barred Rhineland zone using a

Wehrmacht that had orders to retreat at once if the French moved to throw them back. Hitler's most popularity-garnering gamble, and justly so, he did it all alone. While promising his generals that the move would stop short of anything calculated to bring on a war, the Führer had insisted that France would not resist. He was putting to the test for the first time internationally that intuitive genius of which the world was to hear again. For weeks before the Day, he cut short the verbal reportings to Berchtesgaden with an incisive: 'Will the French march? That's all I want to know! Yes or no?'

The French did not march. And why not? At basis because General Gamelin held out for a large-scale mobilization, failing which, he would not guarantee the success of the projected French preventive operation, and because M. Sarraut, up against an impending general election and fearful of losing votes if he ordered a mobilization that would throw the nation out of gear and, into the bargain, quite possibly prove an unjustified luxury, demurred. Was the soldier justified in holding out for so many effectives? Eye-witnesses of the timid German reoccupation have insisted that 500,000 Frenchmen could have made short work of von Fritsch's half-baked troops. The Cabinet had offered 600,000 men or three military classes, to reinforce the standing army for the operation in view.

The knowledgeable 'Pertinax' insisted at the time that the Generalissimo had failed to appreciate the weakness of his opponent. 'It was General Gamelin and his predecessor General Weygand (whose advice the former had quickly enlisted) who instilled doubt into the mind of the Cabinet. In holding out for a general mobilization which would have dislocated economic life, he misunderstood the true state of affairs beyond the Rhine.'

I wonder ; in fact, have long wondered, and not been the only one. What requires to be asked and answered is

this: what was the scope of the limited operation the Government thought sufficient, and was the French High Command in agreement in spirit with a limited operation, at all? Did Gamelin and Weygand want the bigger, complete mobilization, once the Wehrmacht had been pushed back across the Rhine and strafed a little—presumed scope of the limited operation—in order thereafter to realize the Foch dream of a French-controlled left bank of the Rhine, which Britain chiefly rendered impossible of achievement during 1918–30? Once the army found itself again in action in the Rhineland, whatever the High Command said would have to be listened to most respectfully by Paris. If the Left Government there sought to go against the High Command's wishes to remain on a 'policing' mission in the Rhineland, it would assuredly have been replaced by a political team more amenable to the soldiers.

Viewed from today, maybe it is a vast pity that General Gamelin did not get his full mobilization *and* go back into the Rhineland on an unlimited operation. But we were not to know that four years ago. I was in Cologne the week preceding the reoccupation, which was a subject of vague whisper. I drank with S.S. black-uniformed young men, when I think my theme toast, with its tacit understanding, was recurrently of the 'Well, mind you behave after this!' variety. And that it as regularly drew a variation of '*Jawohl!* You needn't worry'.

During the summer of 1938 General Gamelin again had to advise capitally on the strength of one of those comprehensive round-views of Europe, and further afield, of a kind soldiers placed as he must now be prepared to take. This time, he did everything he could to induce MM. Daladier and Bonnet to execute to the letter France's obligations to Czechoslovakia. He never made light of the consequences that would ensue because of France's inferior air force; nevertheless, he declared that in the long run the democratic

powers would dictate the peace. Throughout, General Gamelin was supported by all but two members of the Superior War Council, and had the French Ministers paid more heed to the advice that he gave them early in the summer, the disastrous Munich agreement might well have been avoided. Gamelin himself felt so strongly on this head that, on a visit to London, he went out of his way to acquaint Lord Halifax with the advice he had tendered, greatly to the surprise of the Foreign Secretary, so it has been averred. Which, if correct, suggests—why had not M. Bonnet informed the noble lord? Verily the western democracies were greatly themselves to blame for getting into the mess they did. . . .

There came a measure of compensation for the Generalissimo when, a year after 'Munich', France was enabled to carry through her smoothest mobilization thanks to all quiet on the front but also to a new Gamelin-evolved system by which categories were summoned to the colours instead of cumbersome whole classes. Any chance Poland had was lost by faulty mobilization; in France, the Gamelin model has come to stay.

When last Bastille day a military cavalcade, unique even for Paris, rolled down the Champs Élysées, packed as these had not been since Peace Day, in the review stand was a grey-blue figure inconspicuous among larger-sized politicians and dignitaries. But it was his review, and the troops and public knew it.

Gamelin!

Parisians liked to think he was one of themselves, unlike Joffre and Foch, Pyreneans both, and Pétain, from the Pas-de-Calais, and Weygand who was born in Brussels. That Gamelin was born in the capital as he has said, 'through the accidents of service', that his native stock hailed from the same drear countryside as Pétain's, went unnoticed that day which shall be remembered because only a new peace

procession can ever supplant it in the Generalissimo's life. In the tribune they discussed—whom did Gamelin most inherit from? Indubitably he owes much of his quiet method to illustrious old Sapper Joffre. 'One must get accustomed to thinking. Often, one doesn't see clearly. It is by abundant thinking that reflexes are liberated.' Joffre might have said that, but so might Foch have said: 'Faith vivifies one's task. True grandeur must be animated by the spark of an ideal'; and Gamelin said both.

How can this very complete soldier have failed to form himself as a pupil of Foch at a period of famous lectures, as fighting commander at Verdun under Pétain, in year-long post-war contact with Weygand? His four predecessors look down on General Gamelin from the walls of his bureau, and he has directly assimilated from each. You will never hear him dramatizing, gesticulating, like Foch did ('my right is retreating, my left is encircled, I attack!'), yet this one-time pupil of a strict Catholic school has shown a faith through life reminiscent of that which lay at the bottom of Foch's powers. Though Gamelin is probably closer to the Pétain school. Foch could lose terribly in men. Like the victor of Verdun, General Gamelin is known essentially as a conserver of life, no small factor in a patient siege war when millions of troops are aware of it. After 1935, when he succeeded Weygand as army chief, the Generalissimo vigorously reapplied himself to life-saving in battle, as the art has become affected by the transforming advent of motorized warfare.

If this cautious chief ever gave anything away it must have been in answering a curious friend who in early 1939 asked whether in the event of war the General had in mind an early drive on the German lines: 'What! I do not propose to start the war by a battle of Verdun!' It was, I believe, on the same occasion that a second piece of eloquence broke surface. 'Those who think the Maginot Line

is merely a wall of shelter are under a delusion. It is planned to be a wall at our backs, not a wall to hide behind.'

A lucky thing for Britain, that this French soldier 'thinks war' in all its aspects. He sees every side of it. When the ratio of French to British troops in line is (or was) as twenty to one, General Gamelin's mind operates on a very different plane to the superficial critic's. He visualizes the effects of the blockade, of the economic war, of financial pressure, of diplomacy. The interplay of these. Similarly, he believes in the imperious need for collaboration between allies before war breaks out, in which way of thinking he was backed to the hilt by General Ironside, the two leaders last summer as good as carrying on the unified command, in spirit and practice, from the point where Foch laid it down almost a score years before. It was as if the two had said 'never again!' to all the improvisations, blunders, mistrust of the past.

Mr Hore-Belisha's resignation must have stirred anxiety in Gamelin. Were *les Anglais* recommencing their Whitehall battles while there was a war on? At least their leading soldiers should dispel such thought. Thus Generals Ironside and Gort met at British G.H.Q. to receive the Grand Cross of the Legion.

The main difficulty with Mr Hore-Belisha can be succinctly put in the familiar judgement upon a staff officer's value: 'He can be the most brilliant creature going, but if he can't get others to work with him, he loses seventy-five per cent. of his value'.

So Gamelin came to the aid of Whitehall. The Generalissimo went through Joffre's painful 1916 experience of seeking to work in with Haig, and it left its mark. Each member of a war-waging alliance should be governed by a dual organism. The Premier and Defence Minister giving political direction, and the chiefs of staff of the three arms providing the strategical steering. Frequent personal contact between allies, backed by 'exchanges of

view resting on the written word, with the object of arriving at written conclusions'. Such is the Gamelin recipe, and the General's notes, at any rate, are invested with a terse sobriety that well illustrates the man, ever calm and collected, impossible that any event, however unawaited, should ruffle, far less rattle him.

The Generalissimo superintends the war on land from château headquarters outside the capital, where a train is also pulled up (as with Foch). This setting enables him to get to the armies more speedily than if he had to start each time from the centre of Paris, and makes things far easier from the point of view of air-raid warnings and risks. Every department above ground has been duplicated in bomb-proof quarters deep down in the earth, so that General Gamelin and his staff may carry on uninterruptedly in the sternest situations arising behind the zone of battle.

CHAPTER FOUR

DARLAN—C'EST UN AS !

A USEFUL CORRECTIVE TO FRANCO-BRITISH NAVAL BICKERING of the 1920's I used to find in reading Claude Farrère during journeys to London or Geneva, when the latest 'inexplicable' attitude of Paris over submarines or global this or global the other would be up for conference parley. For this 'Immortal' and former naval officer made no bones about what he thought of the way the French Navy had been permitted to glide down to derisory stature and inefficiency. Reading his ardent chapters, and no matter how bitterly hostile to Britain and Britons his characters were made to speak, you, the chronicler of the present, could not fail to capture a salutary vision of French naval greatness of the past. You found yourself sharing a little of France's indignation that allies of such recent date should want to pare down the French fleet so.

Even an Aristide Briand, least touched by '*gloire*', fond admirer of Britain as he was, could grow annoyed. As a Breton of Nantes he could not be insensitive to the former maritime excelling of his race and showed it when foreign interrogators pressed him regarding French naval plans. I once was involved in a slight manifestation of this. Scene: a suite at the Carlton, London. Time: December 1921. Occasion: a visit of Premier Briand to Premier Lloyd George. Part of the agenda: the excessive French submarine programme. I had been ordered to London, from Paris, to 'get on to Briand' and to get out of that wily soul just why France wanted submarines at all at that juncture. Against whom could she harbour thought of using them? There was nobody on the horizon. Save Albion. So I was ushered up to a suite where Briand was dining with Loucheur, and there ensued a brief exchange during which Aristide rose and paced heatedly, to finish with a wave of command

towards the door and an ' I'll build submarines against whom I like and as many as I like! '

The wonder was that the future ' pilgrim of peace ' did not put it more strongly. I am not thinking so much that Briand had only just returned from Washington where, in the eyes of many Frenchmen, he had by his concessions to the Anglo-Americans rendered impossible the rebirth of a French fleet worthy of the name. I am thinking rather on the historical side. Century after century the question of naval supremacy had jeopardized all efforts of French and British leaders to find a basis for lasting peace. Both peoples loved the sea and knew that they needed naval supremacy to achieve their ultimate national ambitions. The rivalry ended in our favour: the vast colonial empire that England built up in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the result, primarily, of the defeat of the French fleet and the destruction of the French Empire.

Yet, here we were, with all that tremendous gain tucked away, and 116 years after Trafalgar, still at it trying to limit and circumscribe France's position on the sea! Had I been a French Minister, I could have waxed extremely wrathful with any Mr Ferdinand Tuohy calling with the questions he did. For, mark well, at the time M. Briand refused to be badgered, the French Navy scarcely existed as a serious proposition. Just that. Paris had counted on taking over a portion of the German Fleet, but the scuttlings of Scapa—so suspicious in French eyes—put a term to any such hope. During the war years 114 vessels of various categories had been lost and 20,000 tons of new ships had been launched. In the same period we built 1,174,000 tons, the Americans, 873,000 tons, the Japanese, 463,000 tons, and even the Italians, 69,400 tons. In order to concentrate every effort on the land war, and pressed by her allies so to do, France stopped all naval development. For over four years Cherbourg, Brest, Lorient,

Rochefort and Toulon turned out army equipment, heavy guns, munitions, iron bridges, tanks, everything except naval material. The absence of new construction thus brought about, the rustiness generated, the general falling away, many French hoped to see recouped at the Washington Conference.

The defeat sustained must have been the more galling for people of a race aware that they had ever been in the very van of progress and invention at sea. It might have been a good thing for some of us, of the 1920's, to have known that in 1911 none other than the great naval architect, Sir William White, generously conceded that the French Navy had been the world's innovator in almost all directions. Experimenters at sea as far back as the record goes, Frenchmen's invention and design decided more than one turning-point. In the days of sail French fleets usually outsailed ourselves, and not a few British admirals of the past considered their best ships to be those captured from the eternal challenger—witness the 'Implacable'—or others built after their model. Thanks to the vision of that Emperor who has so freely been treated as a mere adventurer, Napoleon III, the French were first with ironclads, Lôme being the architectural pioneer. In the late 'seventies our present allies were first with the torpedo-boat, as they repeated the effort in the 'nineties with the first submersible.

Looking at France's fleet of 1940, she seems to have garnered two lesser category 'firsts': the 40-knot, up to 3,000 tons *contre-torpilleur* with the armament of a small cruiser (our men at Gibraltar called them 'baby dreadnoughts'), and the under-water cruiser 'Surcouf' with heaviest possible armament, range of 11,500 miles, crew of 150 and aeroplane. And this is not to mention the 26,500 tons 'Dunkerque' and 'Strasbourg', alone, with the much older 'Renown', 'Hood' and 'Repulse', uniting the requisite speed and gunfire for meeting with certitude

Germany's pocket battleships. The Battle of La Plata did not modify the two words: 'with certitude'.

Yes, the French Navy of today's all right, and one of the good things is that the renascence has been by none more sincerely applauded than by the centuries-long former enemy. The final, felicitous turn to Anglo-French naval rivalry may have been given by the advent of the bomber, transforming the defensive positions of the two countries, one to the other, but the main thing is that the rivalry is over. When this war had been in progress ten weeks Mr Churchill sealed matters in the House of Commons when he said that the French Navy had never been so powerful or so efficient for generations, and that thanks to the assiduous attention of Admiral Darlan a magnificent fleet for battle and for controlling the seas had been created. Not only had it brought Britain all the help which had been foreseen before the war but it had undertaken heavy additional tasks. He thought it admirable that France could reinforce the Allies so considerably at sea at the moment she was making such a great effort on land.

It is far from descending to the ridiculous to mention next that there are to be 550 *lavabos*—individual wash-places—in the battleship 'Richelieu', one of four of 35,000 tons building. For these fittings are symptomatic of the whole vast rejuvenescence that has swept over this navy. Here you have the last word in hygiene, and in most other directions it is a similar story. In sober fact, the French Navy is the newest, ship for ship, sailing the seas today. It had to be created relatively from zero, which proved an excellent thing in the long run. The naval architects were not turned on to construction until a further four years had elapsed after the end of the last war; that is to say, nothing had been done for eight years, 1914-22. Yet what had other navies done in the meantime? In speed, in gunnery, in endurance, everything had been transformed, even totally new types of

vessels had appeared in the interval. So France's marine engineers and architects, always in the first rank, made, so to speak, a clean sweep of their designing boards and set to building a new fleet from all standpoints.

By 1928, 290,000 tons had come into being, starring the 34-knot light cruiser 'Duguay-Trouin'. The French were able to go into this war with 562,000 tons distributed over 178 vessels, no count taken of reserve and small elements. They will have a splendid all-round 740,000 tons by 1942, and maybe before then. I shall not persevere with figures or technicalities, chiefly because it is hardly sound to pile on the praise indiscriminately—there are of course faults and weaknesses—but what I can vouch for from personal observation during 1939 in the Midi and Brittany, Morocco and Tunisia, representative enough field, bears on the high degree of training and the keenness of all concerned, on all decks. One had heard loose talk of absence of discipline. Maybe *les gars de la marine* have an easy-going way with them even on shipboard—sometimes, in port, parts of their vessels do resemble laundry exhibitions. Maybe ratings do at times appear a little casual with their superiors. Yet that is surface stuff born of *liberté, égalité*, and does not impinge when there's a job of work to be done, or something to be intelligently picked up and learnt.

No other fleet spent so much of peace-time on 'practices' or manœuvres, and how can indiscipline prevail to any extent when crews are constantly put to these most exacting of tests? If any navy has in late years been a sea-going one, here it is. Out constantly in all weathers, to test the resistance of men and material, and the degree of preparedness. At great cost these tests were maintained, and were to breed an inevitable keenness among an over-all personnel of 4,500 officers and 75,000 others. Regarding the latter, one would have to travel far to find a cleaner, fresher, hardier type, health and physique having improved alike from the well-

cooked, genuine meals provided, and from the growing addiction to sport and athletics. As for the officers, one need say no more than that their natural quickness of mind was keyed up by foreign sneering at France, and that they indeed grew extremely keen. And if anyone doubts for the future, let him visit the fine new Naval Academy flowering on the point of Finistère. Here, after 267 years of wandering, even inland to Angoulême, the naval school has come to rest. It originated with Colbert sending two hundred gentlemen of his guard to the two chief ports, there 'to receive lessons in everything touching navigation'. Maybe the two hundred had success with the ladies akin to that scored with almost film-like certainty by their smart aftercomers of today; they could hardly have got away with it more easily. Thrilling film stories have aided in popularizing the French Navy in the abstract; its personnel of all ranks, more concretely.

All of the foregoing, to introduce Admiral of the Fleet François Darlan, though the background may not be judged excessive when I add that this sailor came to incarnate the naval rebirth outlined. If France has a new fleet, she is doubly fortunate in having to preside over it the man who was its principal architect. Credit goes to Briand in his tomb, for first putting young Captain Darlan in the way of promotion leading somewhere: that was in 1922, zero year. In subsequent years he was not all his time at the French Admiralty in the rue Royale—he would seek to cut loose whenever a chance offered—yet as naval secretary or chief of staff under three creative Ministers of the Navy, Leygues, Piétri and Campinchi—the two last, Corsicans, serving to add zest—in these hub posts, he came to be regarded as the incontestable animator-in-chief. Today, I doubt if there is a more popular war leader in the Republic. It is a great thing to have restored pride in a service to which Frenchmen have always dearly held. This Gascon has done no less.

In the doing, his main trouble was to persuade politicians

that it wasn't enough to vote credits in order to possess an equipped fleet on the morrow, but that a long-term programme was necessary, methodical execution of it in stages spread over many years. Anyway, the task was accomplished, and is it so surprising that France thinks she has in Darlan her greatest sailor since the eighteenth century? He certainly commands the most efficient fleet the nation has possessed probably since Nelson's day.

About the only time the Admiral looks his fifty-eight years is when he wears his horn-rimmed glasses at his table in the new French Admiralty, for the hair is now very thin on top and nearly white at the sides, while behind the spectacles the keen glance from clear dark eyes is no longer so evident. As soon as the Admiral rises, puts away his spectacles and dons his cap, the years begin to do tricks: the well-knit frame on the small side but so active, the weather-stamped face, the melodious ring of the voice, the pipe jauntily set, together suggest that happy conserving of physical fitness and mental alertness associated with the salty life spent in the open.

Admiral Darlan is not the student or reader, like Gamelin. Neither is he bitten by the social life, 'the least possible' being his preference. What he really likes when he gets the time is to career off on long motor runs, usually with his son, or else a day's sailing in St Malo Bay, on the shores of which his wife, another *Bretonne*, maintains the family villa and home. A third necessity to the Admiral is a pair of stout brogues, for second only to sailing, is really good tramping, twenty and thirty kilometres. On these pipe-accompanied tramps, often taken alone, were thought out many details of his great creative work.

Darlan has established himself in an Admiralty entirely apart from the Ministry of Marine. He has 'snapped out' of that. 'Crisp' is the word in the new surroundings. You rarely observe more than a solitary sheet of

paper on the table of his bureau. No one loves a clear table more. On that single sheet are pencilled notes of the briefest and most embracing description.

No sign in this office of geographical hangings, of graphs and *mappemondes* and dictaphones and filing cabinets. Instead, a bright room very much in the modern style, polished mahogany furniture and light-coloured leather easy-chairs. On the table (beside that solitary sheet), a pipe and ashtray, a telephone and pencil. Round the room, three mementoes to keep the occupant in mind of his element. An extraordinary photograph by the wireless-set on the chimney-piece, showing the massive tripod of a battleship as if emerging direct from a storm-ravaged ocean. A tricolour presented by the crew of the 'Colbert', inscribed '*Dieu en soit garde*'. A wooden model of the eighteenth-century 'Vulcain', all sails in the wind.

Admiral of the Fleet Darlan is the first of his rank since 1870 and no regulations existed as to salute, flag, or badge of rank when he was promoted. It was decided he should rank as a marshal, with seventeen guns in home waters, and nineteen in foreign, as when he responded to King George's invitation to the review of the Reserve Fleet. Here is how they view this sailor officially, at the height of his powers : 'An admirable capacity for work, a range of mind that liberally covers all the complicated technical and political problems presented to the Navy, a sureness of judgement that at once finds precise and satisfactory solutions, a lucid boldness in initiating progress, an energy that is a match for all responsibilities, an uprightness and loyalty which give absolute security to all, compose the big and solid character of this chief without a peer and justify the unanimous esteem and confidence that surround him in the Navy.'

The Admiral is known for the readiness of his replies and decisions. There have even been those to speak of 'the Gascon jet', as if he did not always sufficiently check a well-



ADMIRAL DARIAN

known tendency of his natal province. Darlan is by nature gay and warm-spirited, carrying an easy touch to his official life save on days when he is difficult and, his staff hope, may be beating up for one of his tours of inspection, outings having the assured effect of restoring him to normal trim. It would, however, be underrating his weight and worth to imagine that he ever 'jets'. One need hardly do more than consider his diplomatic record, for the Admiral has conspicuously served the Quai d'Orsay besides his own political chief. He has been able to bring to bear a world-wide acquaintance with other peoples and nations, a case in point being his close knowledge of the British and their ways. Rather can the readiness of word be traced to the quick-thinking mind of a man who has ranged far and is able to visualize distant situations, a mind stored with the right knowledge, backed by the best of memories, and swept permanently clear of anything calculated to clutter it. No one is more pleased to shake off everything about his job that is redundant, there is none keener to delegate authority. In fact the high-velocity replies are the result of a brain swept for action.

François Darlan's great-grandfather was in the 'Redoubtable' at Trafalgar. With the exception of his father, who branched into politics and rose to be Minister of Justice, the Darlans of Nérac have been sailors for two hundred years. The family's fortune took an upward curve when a grandparent came to own a mercantile sailing fleet of twelve vessels which were still things of beauty sailing the Gironde estuary when François was a boy. There had never been any doubt that the latter's destination would be the Naval College, and here he applied himself from 1899 to 1902. If he was in the future to represent one side of the firmest Franco-British naval friendship in history, Darlan as a youth at Brest heard in the cafés and streets of the possibilities of the French Fleet once more finding itself at grips with the

historic foe. Fashoda and the Boer War had re-lit a pretty sentiment towards *les Anglais*.

There was just one place for an *aspirant* to try to head for round 1902 if he hankered after active-service conditions—the Far East. *Aspirant* is the nearest to our midshipman but the French variety is older in years, and Darlan was twenty-one when he contrived to put in two great years of youth on and about the Yangtse, the ‘about’ taking him to those exhilarating places so abundantly set down in the pages of Farrère. In *Le Quadrille des Mers de Chine*, this author shows what a lively dance it was, not only in pursuit of Romance and exotic experience, but sometimes after one’s ship which could get unaccountably mislaid, or absent herself in the general confusion of Boxer days. Early unfolding so exciting and enjoyable to Sub-Lt. Darlan, that no sooner had he returned to France in 1904 than he set about getting back to the China Station. But this was greatly in demand, and no young officer stood a chance of a second spell. Hold! There was one aperture: by qualifying on some special course. So Darlan qualified first in gunnery and inside six months was experiencing the journey of his young life, right up the Yangtse in quest of the gunboat ‘Orly’. Only, on arrival, to be greeted with guffaws. The ‘Orly’ had not one gun, and here was a qualified gunnery officer appearing! Back went Darlan by junk all the way to Hong-Kong, there to find a sister ship that possessed two guns.

‘Has a sense of command,’ ‘Obviously likes his profession and therefore cannot but succeed,’ ‘Capable of work very superior to his rank,’ such were admiral’s reports conducting to Lieut.-Commander Darlan being appointed in 1912 to the instructional staff of the roving old training cruiser ‘Jeanne d’Arc’, from which one saw the world, as well as the sea, in the company of three hundred cadets. ‘Highly developed sea sense’ was the report now, and the

Legion of Honour for the part he played when a serious fire occurred on board. August 1914 found Darlan well noted and aged thirty-three. His impatience to get where there was action rose steadily from the first day of war. Not seeing the likelihood of sufficient of this on the sea, owing to the way the British Navy was preparing to outshine an already neglected French Fleet, Darlan pressed to be posted to one of the naval units participating in the fighting on the western front. A naval instructor had not much weight, and it was with dismay that he heard of his transfer to an ancient battleship hulk requiring to be put into shape for housing reservists.

'Du courage !'

The rue Royale finally woke up, or grew tired of Darlan's insistent applications. At any rate, in early October that officer was ordered to report with fifteen men at Toul, eastern fortress. There, he was to unload a dozen heavy pieces and transport them to the local arsenal. After provoking mirth by turning up so far inland, the sailors provoked still more when they cast about for some means with which to move the guns. Not that their officer was particularly amused—he finally had to commandeer a steam-roller for traction purposes. Whereupon Toul witnessed a strange and perilous progress as the first gun was towed through the streets, the damage under way not being negligible—trees, vehicles, house frontages, one of two pillars at the entrance to the arsenal. It was this last incident that caused the local general to enquire, not without heat, of the naval gunnery expert: 'And what are you going to do with them next?' To which, the Navy responded that it had no further orders. To which, the Army retorted—all right, if that were so, heavies were urgently wanted at the front, and would the Navy kindly make arrangements to leave forthwith and report to the army holding the heights of the Meuse? 'And go gently,' counselled the general. To

which, the Lt.-Commander replied that he thought they were getting the hang of it. 'And that?' invited the soldier, indicating the arsenal's ex-pillar.

'As it happened,' relates the Admiral, 'that was the last damage we did.'

Darlan's first experience with a naval battery on land was at once a shock and a revelation. Having coped after a fashion with the absence of imperative gun platforms, the navy men showed themselves novices at camouflage and the battery was destroyed. Though not before its pieces had revealed themselves to be of an unequalled precision at long range. Darlan was equipped anew, and thereafter for four years fought continuously. Alsace, Salonika, Verdun, Champagne, north of Ypres, Noyon, a final return to Verdun. Again, I cannot do better than reproduce the citation won in July 1918, coincident with promotion to commander: 'Officer of the very first class, possessing in the highest degree all the qualities of a leader: energy, coolness, spirit of decision. In command of a group of naval gunners in regions of great activity, has not ceased to distinguish himself and to get the most from his batteries during the battles from March 23 to June 10.'

One episode specially bears retelling. In wake of the German break-through of March 1918, Darlan's group lost its division, which had been overrun. His guns had long been mounted and mobile, and for the next week the Commander waged a private war on the enemy. Instead of retiring, he manœuvred his guns behind the Oise. 'Receiving no orders,' he tells, 'I presently thought it would be a good thing to get in touch with formations in my vicinity. I was a kind of commercial traveller in gunfire, offering my services to this unit and that. All the time, though, we kept on bombarding the Boche. Supplies and munitions, we scrounged. We got along very nicely on the spot with regard to the former. "Living on the coun-

try," I think it is called. Never during the whole war did we eat so well! As for ammunition, I managed to get round an officer at the artillery park to the extent that he would give me what I wanted provided I came and collected it. So my men lorried over each day and duly collected. I signed no requisition and only hope that the good major was able later to regularize his books!'

In fact, just a suggestion, a flick of the corsair. . . .

Maybe with the armistice our Gunner thought he would like a spot of water once more. We pick him up commanding the Rhine flotilla. Rare kind of work not uninteresting for its queerness, but by 1920 the Far East was again calling. Promoted *capitaine de frégate*, next below full captain, Darlan went out as chief of staff, and received his first ship, the small gunboat 'Altaïr'. On his return to France after a lapse of two years, this report from the admiral on the China Station accompanied him: 'An energetic officer, of sure judgement, fond of his avocation, has until now had a very brilliant career which he deserves to see furthered in every respect, capable of brilliantly commanding every kind of vessel'. Another phase was opening for the young captain, who was now given command of the Pilots' School. This was no land job and it led to Darlan getting to know the topography of the French coast, its currents, reefs, submarine contours, as none other. The head of the school took his pupils into regions never before risked, deliberately sought big seas. Once, he was determined to leave Brest in the teeth of an easterly gale. At the exit his little vessel was practically submerged four times in succession. To turn for home would mean certain capsizing. Manœuvring with a consummate ability, the captain held on his course until able to reach the shelter he had planned. The episode had the value of binding the school to its chief in an unswerving faith.

In 1925 Captain Darlan passed the senior naval course first

of his seniority, whereupon he was summoned to the rue Royale as naval secretary to the Minister, and until 1928 worked at the foundations of what was to be his great work, the re-creation of a modern and efficient French fleet; and gained this further praise: 'Absolutely complete type of officer. Excellent sailor, possessing a bedrock knowledge of his profession, knowing how to command, as good in council as in action, one of the naval chiefs of tomorrow'. Nevertheless, Darlan grew restless with office work. The ocean beckoned. He wanted to shake free. He was lucky to get the very ship in which once more he could see the world, the training cruiser 'Jeanne d'Arc', in command of which he sailed the Pacific, Atlantic and Mediterranean during two highly attractive years.

It was aboard the 'Jeanne d'Arc' that this sailor's heart came nearest to standing still. Leaving Brest in a storm, he was smoking his pipe on the bridge when the steering failed entirely: with grim swiftness the vessel turned ninety degrees and headed at speed direct on to one of the worst local reefs. Darlan signalled full speed astern, but it was a faint hope. The distance was fatally short. The old cruiser had no watertight contrivances and probably in a couple of minutes he and his class of three hundred future officers would be pitched into the turbulent sea. No one ever knew what happened, but at this dramatic moment the steering righted itself, as suddenly and mysteriously as it had failed. The belief was that a cadet had been leaning inadvertently on a vital electrical cable. So alterations were made. Such was Darlan's closest shave, and had he lost those youngsters, the strength of the future, he could hardly have hoped to live it down. Known for his past challenging of the biggest seas, there would always have been those to say that his very audacity—'recklessness'—unfitted him to more important command. Yet there is nothing reckless in this officer, who would in this instance have suffered from a cruel *force majeure*.

As things worked out, the 'Jeanne d'Arc's' captain notched up this further mention upon his being more lastingly roped in by the rue Royale, at the end of 1929: 'Possesses a rare equilibrium of qualities of character and intelligence. By his exceptional vigour of body and mind, by his taste for action and for the realization of things, by his judgement proof against every test, Captain Darlan is affirmed as a great chief of tomorrow'.

Rear-Admiral at forty-eight, the time had come for realization of all this accumulated and unique praise. I have sketched earlier how Admiral Darlan progressively rose to the occasion. He was not to be all the time at headquarters. At intervals he was given the Algerian station, the First Light Cruiser Squadron, and, on promotion to Vice-Admiral, the Atlantic Fleet. In this command he gave himself wholeheartedly to a task of first consequence, reorganization of the French Navy's hold on what has come to be known as France's 'Imperial Line', bearing a relationship in French eyes to our 'Road to India' through the Mediterranean. The 'Imperial Line' is traced from Brest down to Dakar via Bordeaux, the Azores, Casablanca, Agadir. I was at Agadir in the Spring of 1939, just after Darlan had passed that way on inspection. If events march to plan, Dakar is destined to be the foremost naval and air port probably of the whole African Continent.

Meanwhile highest honours found their way to the Admiral's breast, although whenever he can manage it, he, too, prefers a blue lounge suit.

After commanding in chief at the naval manoeuvres of 1935, the Admiral was made naval chief of staff in the following year—equivalent to Sir Dudley Pound though with the chance that the Frenchman might also command at sea should the course of the naval war render that advisable.

Finally, Admiral of the Fleet. Pinnacle for which they

had to think out that new flag, new badge of rank, new salute. From this eminence, Darlan thinks that navies win victories by (1) soundness and readiness of material, (2) training of all ranks, (3) tenacity and judgement of the chief.

I asked some naval men what was the most memorable thing that came to their minds concerning this sailor. Very much as one, the three agreed 'his handling of the "Foch" in the 1930 manœuvres'. And I learnt this:

'He took the role of a corsair. For five days and nights he defeated the efforts of the Mediterranean Fleet to catch him. With all lights out and at full speed he passed and re-passed the barrages. Signalled one day off Bizerta, the following day he was bombarding Port Vendres, to the general stupefaction. They thought they had got him that time. By ruse and ingenuity, he avoided all the torpedoes of the submarines, all the bombs of the aircraft, intercepted the enemy's cipher and, finding the key, sent out false messages that upset the plans of his pursuers. So, it continued day after day, night after night, and with practically no sleep. In fact, the time came to call a halt if only for physical reasons. But the crew, hearing what was in the wind, went the length of sending a delegation to the bridge asking for more! Darlan relit his pipe and smiled. All right! He would give them another twenty-four hours of it!'

In the rue Royale, on hearing of this modern style evocation of a Suffren, a Jean Bart, a Duguay-Trouin, Minister of Marine Leygues wrote that Darlan had left 'his strong imprint on the brilliant division of 10,000-ton cruisers, which he commanded with a rare and masterly ease'.

CHAPTER FIVE

BATON IN KNAPSACK

PROPERLY SPEAKING, THERE IS NO BATON IN THIS STORY. General Vuillemin, head of France's Army of the Air, is not a marshal. Yet should that rank ever come to be revived and if the corresponding style of Marshal of the Air were created by our Ally, not a scrap of doubt would exist as to who would be the first to hold it. As for the knapsack, that end of Napoleon's aphorism is substantiated by the recorded appearance in 1903 of a burly Bordeaux youth at the local conscript bureau where he was inscribed for the full two years, not having had the social advantage of the *baccalauréat* examination, by passing which others of his age saw their military service reduced by half. Twenty-year-old Joseph Vuillemin joined the artillery and served his term in the ranks, with the eventual effect that today he stands out amid the warring chiefs on both sides and in all branches as the only one to have risen from the bottom to the top.

Marshal Vorochilov could say the same, but under revolutionary conditions. General Vuillemin had to grapple with long and disheartening post-war flying years void of anything like revolutionary opportunity for advancement.

He had to make headway against a powerful officer caste which in aviation matters had allowed itself to grow encrusted by slackness and become the prey of profiteers. The French have a term for graft—'the pot of roses' presumably circulated for confederates to sniff. In the early 'thirties, the amount of pottery circulating under the nose of the Paris Air Ministry attained exhibition proportions. Perhaps a greater handicap was the involving of French aviation in party politics. As if it were not enough that personal warfare ruled among high officers, 'crabbing' and obstructing, that constructors and their agents made illicit fortunes while keeping the new service supplied with dubious material, that trouble in the factories restricted

production to a few hundred machines a year, usually already out-of-date, *l'Armée de l'Air* became sucked into politics at a period when these had about touched their nastiest point even for France. To the onlooker, it appeared as if French Fascists were trying to do nothing less than corner the air arm for their own purposes. Against this, you would be told that the Air Minister, Pierre Cot, was in the pay of Moscow and that only the most alert attentiveness had foiled his revealing a prototype of a wonderful French aerial machine-gun to the Soviet. When the Minister pointed out that Russia was France's ally, and that it would pay France to see so puissant an ally equipped with the best possible, in the air, that led to more ructions.

Whichever side was right, or least wrong, the damage fell all in one quarter, upon French military flying. In an era of scandals, those having to do with aviation were among the fruitiest. There is no wish whatever to harp upon so unpleasant a page, yet this profile of Joseph Vuillemin, self-made aerial leader, cannot be adequately limned without some rough sketching of the morass with which his honest, cleaving, enthusiastic nature had to contend. The depth to which French military flying descended was really extraordinary if you remember two things: exception made of the Wrights, France walked away with pioneer flying in the heroic years, 1909-14, and from that day to this the French have remained the same naturally air-minded people—much more so than the island Britons. French pilots not only rank equal to the world's finest, on account of their individualistic dash and the quickest of minds, but have long been the public's prime heroes. The British have no one to compare with a Mermoz or a Détroyat or a Costes, from the point of view of popular appeal. (It was seriously intended to push Mermoz, South Atlantic ace drowned two years ago, for a form of French 'Balbo', and possibly even 'Führer', in room of the in-

adequate Col. de la Roque.) In sum, the French have ever displayed a marked interest in flying, as meetings at Vincennes and round the country testified. On that account alone, the degree to which the national aircraft industry was suffered to decline came as a surprising lapse.

I have instanced one or two reasons and maybe they incline to the flamboyant side. There existed other causes which, if not making the same headlines, were probably more fundamental. Up to 1930, France possessed the most powerful air force in the world. That gradual deterioration then set in, is in first case traceable to the general non-arming disposition, either forced or voluntary, that prevailed in Europe for many years after the Armistice. With no serious rival in sight France relied on mere superiority of numbers. Quality was badly neglected. Right up to the end of the 'twenties, machines of immediate post-war vintage were still in the majority: Moranes, Nieuports and Spads. Research and design had not been neglected—indeed, continued at the customary high level—but only prototypes were produced, no new types substituted in bulk. The old machines were retained in use, with the idea of keeping the industry ticking over until such day should arrive as demanded the immediate placing of a new air fleet in the skies. The great thing was to avoid premature construction of this new fleet, in view of the rapidity with which aircraft became obsolete.

A perfectly sound notion, provided the lag is not allowed to become excessive and that the great spurt can be realized smoothly and without hindrance when the moment comes. That such was not possible of achievement in France, can be traced to the grievous politico-personal-financial atmosphere that came to poison aerial affairs, but also to the lag being permitted to become too great. When in the early 'thirties the French suddenly awoke to the fact that Italy had built a slap-up, modern air force and that the

Germany of Hitler aspired more than to emulate her, they set about retrieving the leeway amid a turmoil of conflicting opinions and interests, not least the concentration of money and attention on everything to do with defence by land. And on the latter tendency being overcome, worse supervened. With the many billion francs urgently voted for aerial recovery, an air fleet was laid down that progressively grew out-of-date as it was built. An enormous sum was thrown away in this manner. It is not drawing the long bow to say that as late as 1938 machines were being delivered and accepted that had been held up for two years in course of construction and which showed a speed of 95 m.p.h. less than the corresponding type in Germany. It was this outmoded air fleet, conceived in too much of a flutter, impregnated by graft and personal politics, with which General Vuillemin was at long last called to deal, though not allowed to get really down to business until 1938. During four vital years previously, aerial politics and personalities still kept this great organizer and animator 'half in and half out', kept him from exercising that final punch and leadership that was in him. But no sooner in harness, than confidence brimmed—

'Heavens! but are you going to start doubting France? Is it the first time she has found herself in a difficult position? Hasn't she always managed to get out of it? And with what honour! The position is grave? Possibly. But the issue rests with us. They want to get us by trial of force? Good! We shall show them that we can resist the best. You fear that we are handicapped by the condition of our aviation? Don't worry about our aviation! I'm looking after that.'

Words confidently spoken at the end of April, 1939, after the General had been attending to France's rocky aviation for a matter of fourteen anxious months that had included the Munich crisis, when Nazi aerial domination proved a leading factor in determining Daladier's course of action.

Patiently, obstinately, the Chief of the Air Staff restored order and rebuilt organization on a solid basis, which was the hardest part of it; and now 'things were beginning to move'. A sound young Air Minister, Guy La Chambre, tackled the parliamentary side, but it was Vuillemin who, first and foremost, gave back its wings to French military flying, whose spirit had become impaired by the procession from the factories of outmoded models. Something more than the purely material was thereabouts needed to set things right. Pilots, indeed all categories, stood in imperative need of someone from whom they might draw inspiration, someone who would give them back their self-respect in the air. Someone, it would have to be, who knew the whole show from A to Z from personal experience. Someone they could look up to.

They got their Vuillemin, ultimate survivor, with René Fonck, of the handful of super-aces of the last war. Squadron-Leader Vuillemin did not become a legend in those war years, as a Guynemer, a Nungesser, but that was because he did not make a speciality of bringing down Boches. If these got in his way, he strafed them, and often he went after an enemy three and four times more numerous than his lone self, but Vuillemin was essentially a flyer-of-all-trades. He reconnoitred, he photographed, he ranged batteries, he liaised with the infantry, he pursued and he bombed; in fact, he flew out of the war as France's No. 1 bomber. But his name found no place in the popular list of record holders for bringing down Boches, and was virtually unknown to the wider public when the war ended. On the other hand, he had become the airmen's airman, much as one speaks of the novelists' novelist, and twenty years after, the sons of those who thought that way about Vuillemin are deeply appreciative of their leader's present worth.

At the age of fifty-seven and with 5,000 hours of piloting behind him, the General remains one of France's best all-

round airmen, ' of huge shoulders and torso, his features tormented by a magnificent strength '. A great guy, as they say elsewhere. When not reigning on the fifth floor of his brand-new Ministry, a relative skyscraper on the outer boulevards overlooking Issy-les-Moulineaux aerodrome, General Vuillemin is on inspection here, there and everywhere, usually at the controls himself, and never happier than in his flying suit. He will drop in at headquarters in the field, or may appear from the clouds above the training centres of Salon, Istres, Cazaux, Cachan or Villacoublay, or he will see for himself that factory speeding-up is not being exaggerated by report. The squat figure, positively exuding physical strength, is game for any call made upon it.

The General knows that he has the human material, that Frenchmen are born flyers excelling in aerial conflict because of their reliance on individualistic aerobatics, whereas the enemy has been taught to do too much in company, thereby losing suppleness, and his objective in this war is said to be nothing less than that the French Air Force should emerge as the modern replica of Murat's cavalry by whose sudden flank assaults so many of Napoleon's battles were won. He believes that the stage has been reached when grand offensives on land can be tactically rounded off to victory by brilliant intervention of the air arm. As Moranes and Curtiss's and later models come teeming through, he visualizes young Frenchmen sweeping the skies in their pursuit planes, combining a skill and daring hardly to be matched. (None should ever have called them decadent!)

The General sends himself up in a small private lift to his office in the tall Boulevard Victor building, and the thought passes that so he has sent himself up through life, by his own effort. Quite a few people desired to stand in his way at one time or another. Question of origin and his ranker past, question of his outspoken contempt for the *mondain* or, as we might say, parlour type of would-be chief, question of

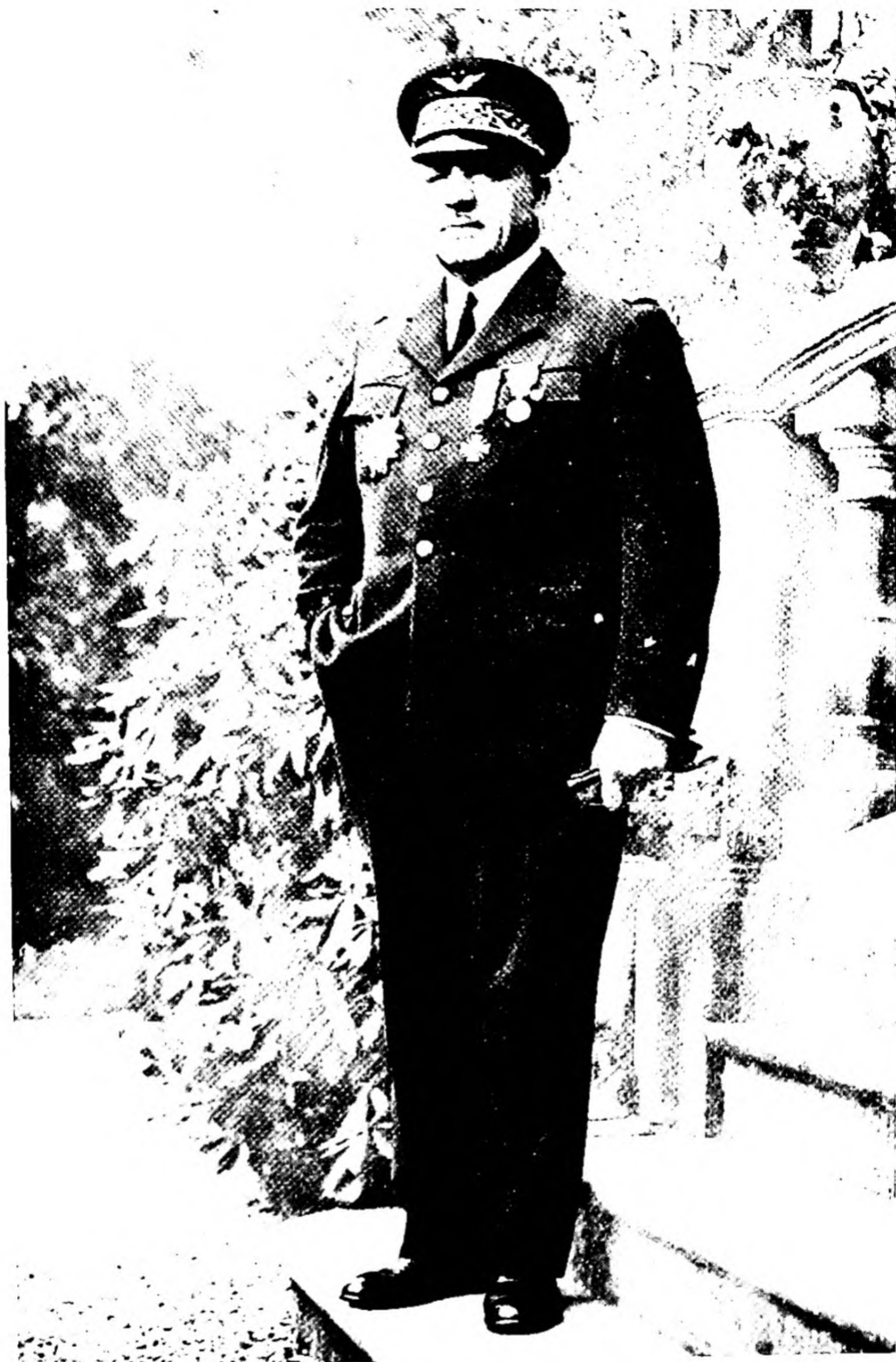
the vehemently expressed Vuillemin efficiency and inherent rightness, apt to queer the pitch of others less qualified by actual experience. There were some who sought to treat Vuillemin as a breezy Bordelais gate-crasher. For these delicates, he looked and undoubtedly was altogether too tough. His lack of address was a source of pain. He had much better stick out in North Africa where life required less polish. Yet, deep down these stalkers and critics chiefly feared the basic clean-up, the fresh spirit which this hardened flyer would indubitably breathe into French aviation if he got the chance. The complete flyer, from leather helmet to warmed boots, his sole objective in life was to get on with the job, the whole job, and nothing but the job, and to the sub-terrestrial regions with everything that cut across this! Aerial politics caused him to break out *à la Bordelaise*, when they did not provoke full-lunged laughter. Window dressing, or its motives, sickened him. Graft sent him frankly cursing. Social finessing as a means of advancing a career gave him a pain. Chasing after honours and awards he frankly could not comprehend. A horror of ostentation and showiness remains an outstanding trait. There is still something naïve about this lion-hearted soul who is the *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, aerial version, provided one sees no reason why modern knightliness should not be clothed in a general ruggedness of presence and composition.

I have seen a letter written by Lieutenant Vuillemin in 1913, which shows his modesty and disinterestedness to have been operating even when he was climbing the hardest rungs close to the bottom of the ladder. He is at the flying school at Le Crotoy at the mouth of the Somme, having secured a transfer from the artillery in which he had gained commissioned rank, and writes to a journalistic specialist on aviation: 'Monsieur, you never write of any but those qualifying for their military brevet in the Paris and Mourmelon regions. You never say anything about the poor

devils who are striving at the Caudron school here. I am not writing for myself, because I have a profound aversion to publicity, and even beg you not to print my letter. But, if you can do something for comrades devoted body and soul to flying, you will be doing them a fine service; because it isn't easy in this part of the world, passing one's military brevet.—Joseph Vuillemin.' My colleague tells how he journeyed up specially to Le Crotoy to find out what were the handicaps there, only to find the writer of the letter already departed. 'Which proved that he was not writing for himself: I found he had already taken his own brevet, No. 287, when he wrote to me on behalf of comrades struggling with poor material in poor conditions.'

Lieut. Vuillemin spent a restless time as Gunner subaltern before they would sanction his trying for military aviation. From the first day that he read about Farman and Blériot, Delagrangé, Leblanc and Paulhan, Latham, Védérines, Beaumont and Garros, he felt himself powerfully, emotionally drawn to the new element man had conquered. But so felt hundreds more of his state and condition. In these fledgeling days, only a favoured, hand-picked few were being selected for training courses, and he had to wait his turn, or upon the play of luck or chance in his favour. If his conscript days left him with nothing better than the characterization 'good soldier of the second class', he could hope for something better from reports during his five years as N.C.O. and three subsequent ones as commissioned officer. In the upshot, he was lucky to put a full year's flying behind him before August of 1914 came round, since pilots thereafter received no such grounding and broke much wood and many bones in consequence.

The curtain was rising on the most complete personal flying epic of the Great War. Epic—that is the fittest term for Joseph Vuillemin from his thirty-first to his thirty-fifth year. During fifty-two months he ceased fighting the



GENERAL VUILLEMIN

enemy in some form or another, only when conditions were impossible or when waiting for a new machine. He could hardly be persuaded to take leave. Totalling more flying above the enemy than any other Frenchman, he was never wounded, while gaining a round dozen citations. He was a living justification of the argument—other things being equal—that those who remained unwounded could be the greatest servitors.

Directly after the Marne had been won, set in 'the race to the sea', whose exploring vanguard on both sides, ever moving further north, was composed of cavalry and armoured cars and a sprinkling of reconnoitring pilots and observers. At this early stage the slender opposing air forces did nothing else (overlooking a rare frightfulness bomb from a 'Taube' on Paris). Yet there was one squadron, a Captain Mailfert's, that went in for trail blazing. To it had fallen the honour of the first Boche brought down by machine-gun fire—a borrowed weapon loose in the cockpit—and the pioneering appetite had been whetted. In mid-September the Squadron was momentarily located somewhere between Amiens and Arras. The enemy was massing for battle at Arras, and daily a young Gunner-turned-pilot was engrossed by the way the Boche brought up fresh batteries without the French artillery being able to range on them—lack of observation—with a view to carrying out subsequent fire for effect. Surely aircraft could co-operate in some way with the artillery, pondered Lieut. Vuillemin between flights over plainly visible hostile battery positions. Of course he would be able to correct French counter-battery fire, bring this closer to its target . . . if only some means could be devised for communicating his corrections to the ground!

Cogitation that culminated in the birth of an idea. Why not signal down corrections by executing prearranged curves and figures aloft? For 'too short' could be executed

the figure 8. For 'over', an O. Vague, yes, but decidedly better than nothing at all.

Thus we have the first known silhouette of Vuillemin as war-time flyer. Using himself and his single-seater Caudron monoplane to signal down corrections, twisting and turning in and out of 'Archie' puffs and by no means immune from rifle and machine-gun fire from below. Another trail had been blazed, one that was to lead to aerial spotters by the hundred wirelessly down their corrections.

In June following, when Vuillemin's prowess earned him command of Squadron CII, there was a small incident recalling Lawrence. Promotion to captain had come, and so little did Vuillemin care about badges of rank or externals in any shape, that he committed the enormity of having his new Air Force *galon* sewn on his gunner's tunic. Not that it mattered in the joyous mess in the rue de Coulmiers, Verdun, where he soon became 'the Captain' for a company destined to reap fame in the coming defence of the fortress. Messes of this kind afforded probably the cream of the last war. You died, yes, but suddenly; and pending that shuffling you lived your days and nights in an ambience of enthusiastic endeavour, of high comradeship, of great good spirits, and no small amenity. If you liked being the hero, you were that too, when on leave, and a magnet to the fair. Adventure presided, from first to last.

One or two survive that Verdun mess, and they tell how swiftly Vuillemin established himself, imbuing all with a gay valour and with his own animation. Personality told, without effort on his part. His example in the air was matched only by his modesty on the ground. 'The young chief goes everywhere. He is to be seen daily at staff headquarters and in the infantry and artillery command posts, while he only has to appear on the scene for liaison between the troops and the air to become close . . . his sign of the "Cocotte Rouge" painted on the fuselage, is heralded by waving from the

trenches. . . . In rotation Vuillemin undertakes battery ranging, photography, reconnaissance. The swiftness and sureness of his sweep of eye are extraordinary. He shapes the flight, does the piloting, scrutinizes the sky in protection of his observer, and in surplus manages to read details on the earth below that have escaped his observation specialist! Nor does he feel that his job is done when he has carried out the instructions of the general staff. A mission permanently haunts him: to affirm an ascendancy over the enemy in all spheres. Upon black specks appearing in the sky, an enemy patrol bent on driving all before it, Vuillemin tots up the number on his fingers, smiling sideways at his observer. 'One, two, three, four' . . . the smile broadens. The sport is about to begin. The observing machine is steered into combat with the hostile fighters, an enthusiastic audience watching from below.'

The Captain's exploits and escapes became proverbial. He attacked a speedier 'Albatros' with nothing more than a carbine, and chased it back over the German lines. When an A.A. shell passed clean through his tank and exploded on exit, he escaped almost certain perishing by fire. As he taxied to the sheds the remnants of his petrol still gushed, but nothing more had supervened—save that Vuillemin was lustily singing a piece from 'Manon'. He went into the Battle of Verdun with this citation freshly bestowed upon him: 'Squadron-Leader of exceptional merit; uniting to fine qualities of intelligence, initiative and judgement, a drive and daring equal to every testing; gives the best of examples to all pilots and observers by constantly executing bold and perilous reconnaissances and by displaying under fire an unchanging coolness and good temper.'

Alas! Verdun was to be a flyer's funeral on the grand and tragic scale, and after four months of it, and forty recorded fights, the Captain came through almost alone of that happy family of the rue de Coulmiers of the year before. Still, a

blind enthusiasm is better than most things for effacing memories, and our 'ace' turned up keen as ever for the Big Push on the Somme in 1916. He also came through that unscathed . . . no, perhaps not quite. Vuillemin had a way of thinking out supplementary missions when his set ones were all completed. A favourite stopgap was to idle about high up, prepared to pounce. A day came when the idler attacked, single-handed, nine enemy monoplanes. He shot down one, forced down a second, and made a safe return. Thirty-four bullets had hit his plane.

For Nivelle's one and only offensive, Vuillemin was given command of the aviation of an attacking corps, with strict injunctions to prevent the enemy from flying above a certain sector whence it was hoped to spring a vital surprise. It was natural that he should himself take on this barrage work, and there ensued a little epic of French war-time flying. Every dawn and every twilight—the danger periods for marauders—he was to be seen patrolling between two points on the front, in his three-seater Letord. *Ils ne passeront pas !* 'The enemy became annoyed at always finding this big and heavy machine barring the way. Three and four Boches would attack it simultaneously, but Vuillemin's magnificent airmanship mastered every effort to dislodge him from his beat. Even Richthofen could not shift him. On the eve of the offensive, the Moroccan Division that he had protected cheered and waved enthusiastic thanks.'

Thereafter Vuillemin concentrated increasingly on bombing reprisals. 'He left the first and returned the last. His comrades christened him "the Guardian Angel" for the way he refused to land until all his "children" were safely home—or all in sight. Time and again he would break off his own homing to return to the rescue of a comrade hard put to it.' In February 1918 there opened the final and most brilliant chapter. Given No. 12 Squadron, which he was to render celebrated, Vuillemin's role was to maintain intensive

bombing by day and night throughout the culminating battles, and he had the record total of one hundred and fifty machines with which to do it. From March to May, one hundred and thirty-two tons of explosives were dropped; in June alone, one hundred and ninety-one tons; and so on crescendo to the end. Vuillemin came to dominate French bombing, himself often attacking aerodromes, railway stations, trains, from as low as three hundred feet, as would be shown when on returning to his base, pieces of his own bombs, as these had exploded upwards, were picked from his machine. He was bombing Marienburg in Germany, the day the Germans were facing Foch, in the Generalissimo's train.

The following week he was 'ferrying' milk to the liberated departments whose ruined communications ruled out other means of access. From bombs to milk, magical transition. Vuillemin had done about everything else in the air that was possible, since the far-off August day when, as an unknown pilot, he flew from Rheims to meet the enemy for the first time. His citations would fill pages. They boil down to: 1, Courage; 2, Technical competence; 3, Modesty, skill, good temper. The final one read: 'Has been engaged without cessation since August 1, in all phases of the battle; boundless courage and abnegation; until the last day of the war did not cease to pursue the enemy, sowing disorder in his ranks.'

For the succeeding fourteen years, 1919-33, Colonel Vuillemin preferred North Africa. One or two fellow war-time 'aces', lacking his character and outlook, preferred Paris and lived to rue the day. The personal transition of a great flyer from war to peace obviously bristles with trouble. One day, a man is the lauded hero for whom nothing is good enough; the next, he must reconcile himself to a return to the humdrum military or civil life. There are two main ways of dodging this, one as indifferent as the other is sound.

Either you allow yourself to be lionized, growing soft in the process, or you strike out in some new direction. This Vuillemin did, with the result that when he left Africa for good, it was with the knowledge that his name would long be associated with the air birth of enormous spaces in the North, West and Centre, including the 'unbridgeable' Sahara. In one of the worst parts, 'the Desert of Thirst' of Tarnezrouft, the commemorative Vuillemin Lighthouse is visible from a distance of sixty miles. A hundred feet high, it is situated at a point nine hundred miles from the Mediterranean coast, and the construction of the post was in itself something of a marvel. From June to October no human can breathe there, so the work was restricted to half the year. Every pebble had to be hand picked at an oasis one hundred and fifty miles distant, and every litre of water—at a cost of a shilling a litre—came from the same quarter.

First of a chain that will one day guide flyers down to the Congo and beyond, it is Algeria's recognition of the Colonel's opening up of one of the most treacherous and impossible flying regions on the face of the globe. He first mapped out a 'route' by placing white canvas buoys on the sand every six miles. That is easily said. But it meant flying under the most arduous and uncertain conditions for many months. Then it passed into years, for, cleaving passionately to his new and self-set mission, it was not long before Vuillemin was 'devouring the caravan routes' in other directions. 'In the immense and burning desolation, across the mighty dunes and ravines, he creates Africa's sky routes and tethers them to the ground.'

The task of prospecting and organizing was punctuated by spectacular first crossings of the Sahara and by a cruise of six thousand miles round its borders. For the first crossing, five machines left Algiers but only two were still in the running by the time Tamarasset was reached, last 'town' before Timbuctoo, twelve hundred miles away. There,

General Laperrine, G.O.C. of the Southern Region, was waiting. Laperrine d'Hautpoul was enslaved to the Saharan wildernesses: had spent most of thirty years there, much of the time in the company of the heroic priest, de Foucauld (murdered in 1917). The valid machines were single-engined war-time Bréguets capable of carrying two, only, on long and difficult flights, but the General had set his heart on reaching the Niger and would not be left on the ground. Major Vuillemin could not prevail to the contrary, so it was arranged that he should lead the way and that the General should sit on the mechanic's knee in the second machine piloted by Sergeant Bernard. 'Keep behind me', ordered Vuillemin, 'a little higher and on the right side. If one of us has to land, and the landing has been all right, we'll put out a letter T. If a landing is impossible, the valid machine will note the place and circumstances and fly back for help.'

Vuillemin flew off, but soon lost all sight of Bernard owing to a sudden sandstorm. One of the risks of the job! Nothing to be done but fly on and hope for the best for his companions. After ten hours, fine pilot that he was, the Major came down by the Niger. The other part of the story was ghastly enough. Bernard had lost himself at ten thousand feet, and after flying vainly until his five hours' petrol was exhausted, made a tumbling landing in which the General was thrown out and injured. Leaving him under the poor shade of a wing, pilot and mechanic ranged the desert on foot until their strength threatened to give. The usual had happened: they had just been round in circles. Back at the machine, they put out every sign they could think of, and counted their supplies: some bars of chocolate, condensed milk, a bottle of liqueur called Arquebuse, sifted sugar, a few tins of meat, and ten cans of water plus what was left in the radiator. General Laperrine was, against his will,

given the pick; he died after a fortnight, and his sufferings are best passed over. The two younger and fitter survivors were down to the radiator water, a fortnight later, when the miracle happened: they were spotted by a search party.

On a later Saharan crossing, Vuillemin had his one and only serious accident. Loss of air speed at an intermediary take-off, at Niamey, brought a crash in which one of the crew was killed and the rest gravely injured. The leader himself was terribly hurt, including a fractured skull, and it took him many months to recover. On the way to fifty years of age, he had positively to stop his perilous pioneering, so they made him a Colonel and gave him command of the flying in Algeria.

With headquarters in Algiers, where the 'seasons' are gay, the sworn bachelor stood his ground for some years, but the lure eventually became too strong in one direction and he made his only capitulation. Ensued a flying honeymoon, naturally, in course of which the site for an (ultimate) villa retreat on the edge of the desert was duly prospected. In 1932 came a change-over to the aviation command in Morocco. Like all good French officers, Vuillemin was loving his North Africa. At the same time, there was this to be considered. Here was admittedly France's most experienced military airman, a proven leader of dynamic cast, a very genuine person, spending year after year—fourteen years, it was to be—far away from the centre of things, Paris, where French military flying was getting in a bad way indeed.

It required one more pioneering triumph on Vuillemin's part before Paris woke up to what they were losing. With infinite care, the Colonel thought out, organized, and launched the *Croisière Noir*, the unexpected evolution of which gave a thrill to Frenchmen at a time they badly needed it (it was the Stavisky depths). At the head of twenty-five machines, Vuillemin flew all over France's vast

African possessions above and below the Equator; every day for five weeks France heard of a new stage accomplished without accident and almost without incident. For fifteen thousand miles the triumph spun itself out as if in answer to Balbo's group flight to Chicago and back. The French pilots flew throughout by threes and fives, and in such formation Vuillemin brought every single one back on time and safe in limb and in wing, for presentation to President Lebrun, at Le Bourget. The President pinned the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour on General Vuillemin's breast, and . . . that was to be all for the present.

It was deemed prudent to keep the suddenly popularized hero on hand, in Paris, though not yet in a creative post of the first consequence. For the next three years, while French military and civil flying limped along compared with what might have been, this born air leader was transferred from one secondary post to another: Inspector-General for the Paris Region, Deputy Inspector of the Paris Defences, President of the Aircraft Testing Commission. Not until the end of 1936 was an appointment announced that really meant business—command of the First Aerial Corps. Eighteen years after his masterly war climax, Vuillemin was in the direct running for head of the *Armée de l'Air*.

This came in early 1938, when the General seized everything with both hands, after his wont, with the effect that by the beginning of the following year it was possible for him to express the view that '*Ça commence à démarrer !*' (things are beginning to get a move on!). At his right hand, was an officer with the soldierly surname of Obstinate; this General Tétu rose to be chief of staff in the field.

Hardly had the new aerial chief settled down in the Boulevard Victor, than he became the central figure in a diplomatic act on the eve of 'Munich' that should find its place in the history of the Nazis and their Ways. A good

many eyebrows had risen when General Milch, deputy head of the German Air Force, paid a visit of courtesy and inspection to France in the early part of 1938. Milch, who is an Honorary Aryan, had been to England on a like mission, when the usual stuff was written about 'the chivalry of the air', the while the average citizen trusted that our own knightly boys wouldn't get too chivalrous and show things to their Teutonic knightly visitor that they shouldn't. Whatever object Goering had in sending Milch to England, and it was far more likely an attempt at further wool-drawing over British eyes plus a sort of glorified snooping expedition, than a positive espionage stratagem, the All Fattest's switching of his Hon. Aryan to Paris had a truly striking derivation. The Germans had nothing to learn from the then French air force, and they knew it. They were not aching to place a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Neither did they stand to gain anything by the Hon. Aryan passing in review massed bodies of French air personnel. No. What Goering wanted was to place the French in the dilemma either of sanctioning a return visit to Berlin by General Vuillemin, or of being guilty of that frightful thing, a *manque de politesse*.

Why did Goering want to connect with Vuillemin? Long-delayed urge to pay his respects? Hankering of one old war ace to swap lore with a second? Hardly. The correct answer should be sought in the amplitude of the visit, when it came to be arranged by the Nazis. General Vuillemin was fêted and received with the utmost cordiality, of course; he was also accorded an astonishing freedom of factories and laboratories, training and experimental centres; in fact the Frenchman was shown much more than any visitor in like situation had, in any foreign country, ever been shown before. The high light came when they drove him on to a vast flying field on which were drawn up four hundred Messerschmidts, then the reputed terror of the

Spanish skies. Four hundred, all identical, side by side, a spreading sea of wings in all directions, crews standing to attention by each craft. Magnificent! Even Vuillemin momentarily took two breaths instead of one (or so they said).

‘If one of your officers, General, would care to make a trial flight—any machine, they are all the same, turned out in series—you would be doing us a particular favour.’

From the French pilot, on his descent: ‘They’re up to our Morane 405’s.’

The French possessed about twenty Morane 405’s at that time, and only a trickle was coming through. Here were four hundred Messerschmidts assembled in one chunk.

Wrote the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*: ‘We salute General Vuillemin as representative of the French Army, with whom an understanding based on reciprocal esteem could probably be more easily effected than with manifold international tendencies of French politics.’

Goering’s object in getting Vuillemin to Berlin was two-fold. Hitler was on the point of staging his coup against Czechoslovakia, and the Nazi hope was that the Frenchman would return to Paris suitably impressed by German air superiority and bring his weight to bear in favour of France staying out. Secondly, there was an attempt to ‘pal up’ with French aviation, in whose ranks rumour had located quite a degree of totalitarian-minded youth.

What may hold survival interest, is the further example of Nazi bogy-bogy technique. ‘Come and see all the terrible weapons I’ve got to kill you with unless you do as I wish!’

Those Messerschmidts were destined to lose something of their power to instil fear; today the tables could be turned to the extent of a confident French invitation to Goering to come over and see them sometime, although in this respect Goering needs small reminder that those who build last

build best. Another thing the All Fattest no doubt retains in mind is that in General Vuillemin the Allies possess the world's most practised bombing expert.

And so, from bombs to Georges and Jacqueline. Another record here: the world's most air-minded children. Their father possesses two small properties, a villa at Royan, very Parisian seaside resort at the mouth of the Gironde, and a retreat built in the Arab style at El Goléa, Southern Algeria; and in one direction or the other Georges and Jacqueline and an adopted junior culled by Madame Vuillemin among abandoned babies in whom she interests herself, have totalled several hundred hours' flying.

One of the first things General Vuillemin will do when this war is over, be sure of it, will be to take off, family joyously complete, for that desert retreat at El Goléa; unless peace should come during Algerian summer, when it would be Royan calling: days of returned sanity fishing from a smack or gathering crustaceans on the rocks.

CHAPTER SIX

'GEORGES'

THE YEAR 1934 WAS REALLY THE LAST IN WHICH PEACE RULED. In December the Wal Wal incident started a rumble that has only swollen and spread ever since. The European air had been heavy all through the latter half of the year, during which two dates stood out, as producing major shocks: June 30 and October 9. Hardly had Hitler's purge, and the nightmare vision it aroused of the new man and system, begun to dim, when up from Marseilles came startling news indeed.

Le Roi Alexandre et Monsieur Barthou Assassins.

I can still see the *camelots* sprinting along the boulevard with the tidings, out of breath through shouting them, dropping coins in their haste to be on and away before the public realized it was buying no more than what was being shouted—black headlines across the page, a couple of inches high, and a brief bulletin confirming them.

True, there was one addition. A General Georges had been badly wounded at the same time. But who was he? Probably some protocol soldier. The thing was—what would the Yugoslavs do now? They had been jibbing at France for some time, and here was their hero king murdered in the first ten minutes of a State visit intended to improve relations!

General Georges, Commander-in-Chief of the French Armies in the field, nearly died that night, and it was months before he could return to duty thanks to submitting to the strictest regime and to exercising an iron determination to get well. Seated facing the King and Foreign Minister, he had sought to ward off the assassin and was shot twice, through the arm and chest. Like Barthou, he suffered from the difficult and jolting drive to hospital—it had to be the military one, in his case, and that was some way off. The truth is, everyone lost their heads at the scene of the crime,

and if the General had been taken to the nearest doctor, the internal hæmorrhage would not have gained the proportions it did.

The French were to learn in succeeding days who this General Georges was. 'The Benjamin of the Supreme War Council.' 'Pétain's right hand in the destruction of Abd-el-Krim's revolt.' 'Poincaré's economic soldier in the Ruhr.' 'Foch's Balkan adviser.' So, the record was unfolded, while, as for the future: 'The highest expectations are permissible concerning General Georges and the role he might be called on to fill in the event of France becoming involved in another European war.'

Meantime, the victim passed as much of his convalescence as he could on a roof garden of his own devising over his apartment in the *École Militaire* quarter of Paris, to which so many distinguished French soldiers gravitate, both in retirement and when still on the active list. This was his fourth wound, and he insisted to friends that the one he suffered in the battle of the Grand Couronné, in early September 1914, had been more serious. On that occasion he was two whole years recovering, bitter interlude when he might have been advancing in rank as his contemporaries were doing—a Gamelin, for example. Georges was still a colonel at the age of fifty. Not that that is exceptional in the French Army, Pétain having not progressed any further at fifty-eight; nevertheless, the Georges of fifty would have to busy himself if he intended arriving anywhere.

It was at this stage that I came up with the Colonel in the Ruhr, as most correspondents were bound to do at one time or another, inasmuch as this officer had been selected by General Degoutte to supervise and 'give impulsion' to the business for ever illuminated by Mr Lloyd George as 'digging coal with bayonets'.

The next time I was to see him, things were easier. I have told of that landing at Bizerta, yet the General remains more

closely linked with the review behind the Mareth Line. There he was, for an hour, hardly five paces away, standing outside a spreading, black, camel-hair tent, beside Daladier and Vuillemin. The trio saluting as the gorgeous spectacle came to its high moments.

You would look twice at this soldier anywhere. Big and solid, vivacious of word and gesture, brown-eyed and olive-skinned, seeming to have assimilated something of the tint and features of the Algeria he loves, 'Georges', as all France now knows him, is a masterful character. A pipe jutting below a grey little tooth-brush affair on the upper lip, whitening hair swept slickly back from a broad forehead, do not lessen the impression of forcefulness. 'A hard man to come up against.' But evidently a just one, and a brainy one. 'The eminent and distinctive trait of this virile figure,' writes old General de Castelnau, who gave Captain Georges his first leg-up by getting him the battalion at the head of which, however, he was to be grievously wounded almost at once, 'is conscience. His sense of equity, his frank dealing with everybody, on occasion carried to ruggedness, have contributed to his merit being recognized on all sides, without reserve. The other day, someone speaking of General Georges in my presence, said: "He has got a brain!" "Certainly," I replied, "and will-power." Because for a real chief, and especially for a chief in war-time, will-power is at least as necessary as intelligence.'

The Georges strength of will writes itself on the surface. What is encouraging is that all are united in praising this soldier's penetrating mind, probing and circumspect, able no less to tackle detail than to grasp the whole, and at the same time his qualities of leadership that include the gift of never being 'down'. Moreover, a frank and cordial nature makes the General a stranger to intrigue and the value of this at the top in existing circumstances should perhaps be brought out. It will be hurting no one to go back a little.

Why did so many high French soldiers become 'unstuck' last time, particularly in the opening months? One does not suggest for a moment that the unsticking was preponderantly on the French side. It was not. Statistics with which I quitted the last war showed our complete casualty list of senior officers in all theatres to have been: five Commanders-in-Chief, eight Chiefs of Staff, five Army Commanders, and sixteen Corps Commanders. Still, the French tale was grim enough. The important thing here is that it was not due to incompetence alone. Personal antipathies, political and even religious clashing, social distinctions, brewed jealousies and ill-will, burrowing and intrigue, had tragic consequences on the battlefield; quite apart from an *offensive-à-outrance* mentality, legacy of a damaged pride of 1870, which also took heavy toll.

Joffre relates what a grieving day it was for him, when he had to remove his old friend Lanrézac; but this officer had lost the opening battle of Charleroi in calamitous style. General Pau thrust pointlessly into Low Alsace, and had to come out again, more quickly still. I met him later, in Warsaw, a one-armed veteran aptly wearing the little 'imperial' beard of the Second Empire.

Not without difficulty Sarraïl and de Castelnau managed to hold their courses for over two years, when the former went to Salonika. D'Amade had previously gone to the Dardanelles by way of release from the Western Front. 'Pappa' Joffre lasted twenty-eight months during most of which he had to bear criticism of costly 'nibbling'. (His British opposite number, Sir John French, survived fifteen months.)

Foch had violent ups-and-downs and in 1917 had to be rescued by Clémenceau from what threatened to be a permanent 'limoging'. The future Generalissimo, having reached the age limit, was listed for Limoges, enforced refuge of high officers no longer wanted save 'on ice' (as a later generation would put it).



GENERAL GEORGES

Franchet d'Espérey experienced squalls, but fortune had smiles in store and he was to finish in fine style in the Balkans where the British knew him as 'Frankly Desperate' on account of a tendency to flare up. He lives on, a cripple through a motor smash, and one of France's two surviving Marshals, the other being Pétain, an obscure colonel at the start. A second survivor of the original army commanders is de Castelnau who, at eighty-eight, writes for the reviews.

Galliéni and Maunoury were made Marshals after their deaths, and after the war. The first as 'the Saviour of Paris', the second, for the Victory of the Ourcq. Both these feats greatly contributed to, if they did not engender, the Victory of the Marne. But Galliéni was subsequently to encounter difficulty on difficulty as Governor of Paris, and, later, as War Minister. He died in 1916. One-eyed Maunoury had seen his 6th Army dreadfully hacked after the Ourcq; he was half invalided, half shown out, a great injustice, so they said, when posthumous rehabilitation came in 1921.

It seems to come down to this. One French soldier among those who commanded armies or higher in 1914 came through to the end without, as the army saying goes, 'blotting his copybook'—Marshal Fayolle, who died in 1920.

It is no easy matter at this stage to dilate on Gamelin's generals, most of whom have genuinely shunned the lime-light—'*ont une horreur de la publicité*', maybe the damaging career effects of over-publicity having struck home—but examination of their past records points to the unlikelihood of their experiencing the uneven passage that Joffre's commanders did a generation ago. They have this great advantage over their predecessors—that instead of inheriting an 1870 aura with its attendant intrigue and political *cliques* in which leading soldiers became involved, the joint inheritance now is that all commanded units, as young officers, in the

slaughter of 1914-18 and that all have ever since held one thought uppermost: to give major expression to the scientific treatment of warfare, to advance, if you will, 'the brain arm' by every means, in order to prevail with least losses and best resultant morale. An only less urgent care is for the comfort of the troops, memory awakened of their own hardship in the line and out of it. Add to this a sense of personal loyalty one to the other, that positively did not exist 'last time', and may prove of inestimable value when help by one army to a neighbour becomes necessary in battle.

This new atmosphere finds one of its staunchest supports in General Georges himself. Twenty early years of service advancing slowly as a regimental officer in 1894-1914, hard and rough African soldiering, tough living, generally, left an indelible mark. Born in the centre town of France, Montluçon, Alphonse Joseph was 'the issue of one of those modest families, as still freely exist in France, who are legitimately set upon the cultural and social ascent of their children. In such a home, hard work, professional conscience, love of country, are a constant tradition and a veritable religion' (Castelnau). He was, in fact, a schoolmaster's son. Young Georges attended the Lycée Lakanal, where he left the memory of 'a well-built, vigorous and active boy, of decisive ways, always laughing, ever doing something, rapid of word and gesture'. He always intended to be a soldier and had no difficulty in entering St Cyr and of duly qualifying in style as 2nd lieutenant. Bent on seeing active service at the earliest moment, he joined the Algerian *Tirailleurs* and was not disappointed. His life lay in unpacified North Africa for many years, during which he piled up minor campaign on campaign. His record today reads: twenty-one greater or lesser campaigns, three wounds (four with Marseilles), five citations. All this hard going made of him essentially a realist as opposed to the

theorist. The C.-in-C. retains a hearty dislike of formulas, whether applying to small or big matters. For him, the art of war is no more to be learnt out of books than is the art of living. One must have been through the mill.

August, '14, found Georges a Staff Captain in Paris. He was forty, full of first-hand experience, of obvious qualities and qualifications, but scarcely a man marked for the biggest things. Nor was luck on his side, for the war was half over before he had recovered from the wound received at its opening. He was sent to Salonika, the 'Cinderella' front, just when things were locally about at their sultriest under Sarrail, a fine soldier but a 'political' one, suspicious and given to intrigue and to lording it. My 'Intelligence' work did not take me to Salonika until long afterwards, but a good deal about the Sarrail days lingered by hearsay and in daily fact.

'Cinderella'! The neglected and despised front, the butt of all, fed on other people's leavings. In the end 'Cinders' picked up her skirts and went to the ball with a vengeance, but the months and years of dreary demoralization that went before! Something brooded over Salonika that brooded over no other front, and I went from France on a tour of duty to them all in turn: Palestine, Mesopotamia, Italy, as well as Greece. The place was unhealthy and burnt out, its war-time inhabitants came passably near being the dregs of the Levant, the concentrated boredom plus apparent aimlessness of the Line were utter. The local Allies could not or would not keep off each other's toes and spied one upon the other almost as much as they did upon the common enemy.

Much bad temper amid the unholy Allied jumble was still in the air in 1918, the active *malaise* being stimulated by the rarity of leave, owing to the U-boats, which also put Salonika on permanent short commons and comforts. No, the ill-nature was not surprising. Yet, however superior

and Gaul-provoking some of our sahibs may have been, the French were also being 'at their most difficult'. A good thing, maybe, that the future French Commander-in-Chief was able to absorb first-hand what a pass military affairs can come to, between allies, when neither the spirit nor will is present for the installation of a give-and-take frame of mind. Take the sandwiching of a French formation between British and Belgians. This was done to keep British influence confined and our activities less shining, for it lessened local efficiency considerably, making for duplication and confusion, especially on the lines of communication. It was also responsible for a protracted espionage scare at our G.H.Q., the fear being that spies—of course not Frenchmen—were introducing themselves into our area, garbed in the horizon-blue of France. *Poilus* positively overran our zone, freely in pursuit of rather appalling young women, and it was obviously a matter of the greatest delicacy questioning them. Rarely can such carnival of treachery and spying have been held in the wake of an army, as at Salonika, amid the million odd French, British, Italian, Russian, Serbian, Belgian and Greek troops based on the city. Events reached their most ludicrous pitch over at Athens, where the French espionage chief, a colonel, went out of his way to queer the British secret service show. Lt.-Colonel Georges must have been drawn into some of this when, in 1917, he joined the mission of Ambassador Jonnart, after the deposition of King Constantine.

Back in Paris, Jonnart related that there was 'a really fine fellow' being wasted out in Greece, and General Foch, then beginning to co-ordinate for the Allies from celebrated 4 bis Boulevard des Invalides, was one of those who heard. Thereafter, Georges acted as Balkan adviser to the Generalissimo-to-be, and Weygand relates how the tempestuous natures of senior and junior used to provide storms. Weygand would have to calm the sixty-seven-year-old Foch after a

bout of argument during which the forthright forty-three-year-old Georges declined, with all courtesy, to sacrifice his independence of viewpoint, once certain of its value. But Foch secretly admired this attitude, and profited by it, retaining his Balkan aide. The apprentice Georges never was intimidated by ‘ *les grandeurs de chair* ’—the bigger the man confronting him the sturdier he bore himself.

After armistice, there fell the job of military attaché at Athens; gay Grecian interlude of Venizelist victory, and mostly of chaos all about the Levant. Then the Supreme War Council appointed the Colonel head of the Allied Military Mission with the Greek armies, upon these massing in Asia Minor to encompass the swift overthrow of Mustapha Kemal. What supervened in the way of military rout as devastating as it was unexpected, came as additional first-hand experience for the Supreme War Council’s observer.

The years 1922–5 were to be full, varied, and decisive for Georges (and instructive to his biographers). He was first sent to command a battalion of Moroccans on the Rhine just when the Germans were waving the colour question like mad in the hope of garnering particularly American compassion of a practical kind. This was the time that Poincaré raised all the hullabaloo by sending ‘ black ’ troops into civilized German cities. I have cause to remember it, for the little Lorrainer protested to me at the Quai d’Orsay and dictated a statement I was to send to my readers of ‘ President Wilson’s paper ’ (the defunct *New York World*). Algerians and Moroccans, emphasized M. Poincaré, were *not* black in the American sense. They were *café-au-lait*.

Colonel Georges clearly appealed to Poincaré as the kind of officer to be relied upon for the hard job shorn of sentiment, for that officer’s next appointment was as General-in-Chief Degoutte’s representative in the heart of

the smouldering Ruhr, controlling militarily the forcible removal of reparations coal and coke. The Colonel was really Poincaré's executant on the spot, a thankless task, but one in which he displayed a talent for organization and a rare sense of command. In fact, as soon as Degoutte was raised to the Superior War Council, he brought in Col. Georges as his military secretary. This council consists of full generals and is kept to nine or ten in number. The surviving two Marshals are life members, and it will be interesting to see if the rank is revived in this war. The French feel that when Marshals have been too evident, wars have been lost, that the exalted rank brings them no luck. Contrariwise, eight were made as a result of the last—victorious—war, though a movement in 1935 for the elevation of General Weygand was without effect on the Government.

Colonel Georges was now well on the inside, and so, as soon as Marshal Pétain looked about for a likely man to take with him as chief of staff to Morocco, where Krim had seriously to be taken in hand, his choice alighted on this tried officer with so much past experience of North Africa. The Krim clean-up was quick and lively, after the veteran Lyautey had, pathetically, rather botched matters on his beloved Moroccan soil at the very end of his active career. And Georges returned to France a brigadier and never afterwards looked back.

It was time he attended 'the School for Marshals'; time he commanded a division (again Algiers). Time he were taken into the innermost secrets of the military machine, which War Minister Maginot did by making the Brigadier his military secretary. Followed the post of Deputy-Director of National Defence Studies, command of the 19th Corps (always Algiers), and promotion to the Superior War Council a short while before the Marseilles crime. While the General was yet convalescent, Weygand had gone from

the post of Generalissimo-designate and Gamelin had taken his place. There was to be a return to the 1911 model for the high command, and General Gamelin appointed as his two closest collaborators Generals Georges and Colson; the former to second him as Generalissimo-designate, the latter to deputize as Chief of Staff of the army. And there they are today, Generals Georges and Colson, duly occupying the posts in which as deputies they respectively proved themselves under Gamelin's observant eyes, in peace-time.

From his G.H.Q. somewhere in eastern France, General Georges controls forces strung out from Dunkirk to Mentone. He has up to five million men under him, for whom he answers to Gamelin, back in Paris. The British Commander-in-Chief, Lord Gort, comes direct under Gamelin, though a form of gentleman's agreement is believed to be working by which, until the British armies in France have assumed greater proportions, the more experienced Frenchman's G.H.Q. is in practice the fount of operations. Compared with a Joffre established at Chantilly, the present system has obvious advantages. In 1938, the 1911 model of the High Command had been thrown over with the elevation of Gamelin to the hitherto non-existent post of Chief of Staff of National Defence. This enables Georges to report to Gamelin and Gamelin to Daladier, whereas in the foggy Joffre days there existed no such Gamelin link, and if the General-in-Chief did not wish to communicate information to his Government, which was frequently, he just kept silent, and a nation at war continued to be governed by men themselves largely in the mist. In his memoirs, Poincaré sufficiently stressed that side.

The run of this odd war makes it as yet too early to give other than the briefest glimpse of the French C.-in-C. down to his task. His chroniclers insist that he once went the length of vowing never to give an order to attack unless he was certain of success. That may have been said out in

the *bled* or desert, or in any circumstances. What emerged from the opening action of the war, towards Saarbruecken, was a notable and heartening demonstration of few casualties, big relative gains. But in point of fact, up to this writing, General Georges' attention seems to have been almost as much directed to the well-being of his troops as to their manipulation in battle. He and his generals realize, from personal experience as junior officers, what trenches in winter can be like, and even billets. So blankets, woollies and boots, warm canteens, good rations and wine, have formed the main topics 'at long and solemn staff conferences, held every day with a view to examining how the material and moral comforts of the men can best be assured'. One material comfort for which 'Georges' was credited by its beneficiaries had to do with the remarkable innovation of ten francs extra a day for all occupying a position of danger, though much elasticity must exist in the drawing of such a danger line. Obviously, men stationed far behind can in air-war days be in as great peril as troops in forward positions.

Another live care concerns communist propaganda in the fighting formations, among bored men separated from their homes. It was General Georges' special task to tackle army 'redness' during the social troubles of 1936-8, so that the C.-in-C. is broken to the problem.

The Georges spirit renews itself again and again in the higher command. I have suggested these officers should experience a smoother passage than their predecessors of 1914-18, and in support of this expectancy may be summarized one or two outstanding careers.

General Billotte, a tall, robust colonial officer, has established a record unlikely to be bettered in our time. After Tonkin and the Boxer rising by way of *hors d'œuvre*, he was on continuous active service for seventeen years, from 1910 to 1927. It started in early 'Lyautey' days, in Morocco,

continued throughout the World War of 1914-18, then resumed with the Poles against the Bolsheviks (as Weygand's chief of staff in that happy French intervention); followed the Druse campaign in Syria, the war with Abd-el-Krim, finally a return to the turbulent Lebanon.

This son of the Midi used to be kept ready for dispatch when and where trouble broke. In 1932 it was to quell grave Indo-China mutiny and massacre. Imposing of appearance, Billotte has the self-confident manner that goes well in native dealings, together with a reputation for no beating about the bush. ‘ He instantly cracks the shell to get to the nut.’

General Billotte laid his foundation in the higher military art when, thirty years ago, Foch made the departure of retaining the first fifteen pupils at the War College for a further year. Weygand, and several others to become famous, benefited by this innovation which, Billotte tells us, Foch hit upon as a result of studying Frederick the Great who, having constantly to complain of the inadequacy of his lieutenants, conceived the idea of picking out a bunch of the better equipped officers with a view to impregnating these with his own ideas.

Foch's original post-graduate school was to blossom into the institute facetiously known today as ‘ the School for Marshals ’.

Billotte was Military Governor of Paris when war broke out. It was no secret that the post fell to him mainly because Defence Chief Daladier wished to have, close to the Quai d'Orsay, this officer's deep and far-flung experience.

General Hering, who took Billotte's place, commands the armies of Paris and would command the capital's entrenched camp did the Germans make headway towards the Seine. The importance of this post will be appreciated if you recall that it was the one the great Galliéni held when his counsel and action decisively shaped the Battle of the Marne.

An Engineer officer, Hering arrived in Paris with fresh laurels culled in the summer of 1939 when, as Governor of Strasbourg, he was responsible for securing Alsatian defences along the Rhine, perpetuation of the Maginot system. The General not only ranks almost the highest for putting ground into a state of defence. He has to support this mantle bestowed by Marshal Pétain, who selected the forty-year-old Major as his military secretary in 1919: 'He is the depository of my doctrine'. Implying, one must assume, all that has been read into the Defence of Verdun; coupled with the old Marshal's resolute technique for avoiding casualties.

Exceptional faith is felt in General Giraud, 'summoning a chevalier of the past, very tall and thin, memorable steel blue eyes that sparkle, a heart inaccessible to fear, the born leader who dares but only when he is ready, and of a frankness that sometimes takes aback friends and associates, yet is due only to a total absence of mental reserve'.

This commander has twice been left for dead on the field: in the first disastrous battle of 1914, at Charleroi, secondly, in the crucial battle of Taza, that kept Krim from severing Morocco from Algeria.

Shot through the lung, Captain Giraud lay evidently dying in a cottage outside Charleroi. A German doctor-major who visited him seemed to be sympathetic, so one day Giraud asked if he would transmit a letter to his wife—just bare details that the sender was alive, and the envelope left open. The German refused point-blank.

'If the position were the other way round, I'd do it for you,' answered Giraud, simply.

'Yes, the gallant French!' came back the enemy.

'But,' relates General Giraud, 'the following day the Major returned and held out an envelope which I saw was addressed to his own wife, back in Germany. "Put your letter inside," was all he said. "She'll see that it gets

through." I did so, and handed back the envelope unsealed. "Seal it up," said the Major.

'Three weeks later, when I had been reported dead, the letter arrived. My wife had never believed I was dead. She kept on insisting "Has anyone *seen* him dead?"'

But when it came to smuggling himself out, in somewhat mended condition, Giraud could not rely on his chivalrous German: instead, the Mayor's daughter, a French girl, stepped in. One night she passed Giraud the key by which to get out of the cottage, together with a suit of overalls. But it took the escaping officer six whole months of precarious disguise, to cross Belgium into Holland. Knowing nothing of the trench stalemate that had set in right up to the sea, Giraud had first sought to cross back to the French lines at St Quentin.

The General relates that during the ensuing months he followed half-a-dozen occupations, including stable man, accountant, coal-man, and even mountebank.

Can men who in the undimmed past of their lives have had such experience fail to draw rewardingly upon it when raised to the command of armies these days?

General Prételat reinforces the tradition among France's contemporary commanders, of having deliberately set out to rough it early on. Passing from St Cyr, for the infantry, Lieut. Prételat elected to join the Foreign Legion at a time when this corps was about at its roughest in the first decade of the century. Few even at St Cyr do this. While African service is freely chosen, it is most times with the Algerian or Moroccan regular forces.

A precociously brilliant career led to General Prételat being some years ago entrusted with the first mechanized manœuvres, when he displayed a thorough comprehension of what is to be extracted from modern armament. Since then, he has stood out increasingly as the specialist on scientific warfare, in which capacity he resembles General

Brooke, to whom falls the command of the Second British Army (the first, Haig's old job, going to Sir John Dill).

In his legionary days, Prételat learnt how to spare the troops unnecessary fatigue and danger, and for that reason he is currently a prime favourite with the men who, by the way, dislike being called '*poilus*'—hairy ones—any longer. They are now mostly clean shaven, and *très* spruce. Otherwise they sport very Italian-looking fringes of beard, thinly cut down each cheek and round the chin.

General Réquin has two claims to our attention. He is the officer who knows the Maginot Line best, having attended to its building and wonderful morale-conserving equipment. And he did much on the French side to promote the 'spirit of coalition' between French and British armies, which has been so welcome a feature all along. When, at a Paris luncheon, Mr Hore-Belisha referred to 'our Gamelin', that must have been a good moment for General Réquin who worked and planned in peace-time for a better inter-allied system. He never forgot that in 1917 alone, over four thousand French officers had to be detached to allied armies, and desired that as much as humanly possible in the way of co-operation and mutual comprehension should be essayed before the bombardment began.

Second Lieut. Réquin went out to North Africa in the infantry, and stayed there for the first sixteen years of his service. Staff appointments led to his being made liaison officer with the American E.F., in 1917, and this conducted after the war to a protracted sequence of semi-diplomatic soldiering: as army commissary at the Peace Conference, at the League of Nations, as military secretary to four War Ministers. It was with a sigh of relief that the General left the rue St Dominique, in 1932, to take command of the famous 20th Army Corps, at Nancy, though he may not have dreamt at the time that the transfer would make of

him 'the man of the Maginot Line', its most illustrious guide for visitors of mark or consequence.

Normally General Réquin would at present be head of the 'School for Marshals'. Incidentally, this school might be worth considering by others, especially in war-time, as it has been made to spread beyond soldiers to include a hand-picked few diplomats, financiers, public works experts, and Ministry of the Interior officials, who are jointly taught to comprehend the soldiers' angle on warfare, and instructed in the secrets, rules and laws of military science.

Time enough for Réquin to return to this novel academy of the middle-aged; not a doubt but that hereabouts he prefers, and by much, to command an army defending France's 'Marches of the East', over soil he knows more intimately than any other general.

Algerian-born General Buhrer, created Chief of Staff for the Colonies, is actually commanding an army whose elements are semi-coloured, semi-white, a force that the young Nazi infantry will not care to come up against too often. France is putting into the field infinitely more coloured troops than in 1914, thanks to the foresight and energy of Colonial Minister Mandel (real name Rothschild), whose punch comes from long service beside Clémenceau. And Buhrer is the European animator of these legions. Exceptionally, he qualified from the N.C.O.'s Academy at St Maixent. As a young officer, he discovered coal in Madagascar. Nineteen-fourteen saw him professing at St Cyr, but that kind of job never appealed, and the colonial infantry captain's record in the succeeding four years was—twice wounded, three citations. As long ago as the early 'twenties he set himself to work out a reorganization of the army, for which purpose he kept pumping facts and ideas into politicians. 'Buhrer is a flame', you heard it said. And 'Buhrer chases responsibility as others flee it'. Or 'Buhrer

has immense tenacity and will-power'. Well, for long years this officer had ample chance to display his qualities, as he persevered with his self-set mission. In the end he owed his recognition and rapid rise to Édouard Daladier, whom he used to coach prior to that statesman's parliamentary interventions on army subjects.

General Bourret would have led the coveted campaign opposite Italy (one is careful these military times not rashly to say 'against' her) had Mussolini swung into active line with Hitler. One I was on the point of overlooking, a very important soldier, is 'the Major-General', or Chief of Staff of General Georges' armies. General Bineau must not be confounded with General Gamelin's Chief of Staff. A second sapper, General Colson at once got away to the front, in 1914, commanding a company in Lorraine, but his talents lay elsewhere, and today he is outstanding as the one who knows how to get maximum rendering and effort from a General Headquarters. The wheels within wheels of delicate and complicated staff work and duties at his fingertips, General Colson is the Generalissimo's most intimate collaborator. General Georges prepared to command in chief the fighting armies, General Colson prepared these armies materially for the campaign. Each working under Gamelin.

There is no gunner or cavalryman on high as yet, unless we include the evergreen Weygand, once the joy of Saumur Riding Academy, and he properly belongs to another chapter, as holding an African command. Turned seventy, he is the only distinguished officer of the last war participating actively in this. Moreover, five years ago Gamelin was under Weygand and now it is the reverse.

Of late years Weygand used to ride every morning in the Bois. One day a friend of mine beheld him obviously learning to drive a car. What had happened? Where were his wonted beautiful mounts? 'They' (the Army) had

taken them from him, and he could not afford out of his pension to buy substitutes of the necessary quality and maintain these. So 'Foch's right-hand man' decided, at seventy-two, to set about adopting the locomotion of the owner-driver. 'I have mechanized myself', he explained. 'Must keep up with the military fashion!'



GENERAL NOGUÉS

CHAPTER SEVEN

NORTH AFRICAN SENTINEL

UP TO A WEEK OR TWO OF THE OUTBREAK OF HITLER'S WAR there persisted a strong and not unenlightened current of opinion to the effect that the totalitarian-democratic clash, when it came, would quickly be transferred to North Africa, as main theatre of operations. Articles, broadcasts, commentaries, even books, did not draw back from visualizing the Mediterranean as a blazing lake. The war would be fought principally in Africa because that would serve the dual purpose of shifting its anticipated horrors from the European Continent and of welding the Rome-Berlin Axis into a strategical entity: the Germans would troop over the Brenner in support of the Italians and the pair would pour across the Eastern Mediterranean to Libyan and other shores. Italy would be fighting where her heart and hopes lay, and Germany could look forward to dealing Britain a deadly blow on the Suez Canal, prelude to wider conquest. And there would be the new totalitarians at the Spanish end. . . .

General Ironside will not mind my quoting him appropriately: 'The centre of the British Empire lies in the Suez Canal. When the story of this difficult period of our history comes to be written, the compilers will comment upon our strength of purpose or stupidity according as to whether we stand firm at this centre or not. We must make sure of the Middle East—Iraq, Palestine, Egypt. Let us make ready our Middle East Area and with the French in North Africa concert our plans. It means a clear understanding between the two governments and permission to their staffs to complete the details. It means secrecy. It means honest co-operation. And both these the French and ourselves have achieved before. It means the avoidance of such campaigns as those of the Dardanelles, Salonica, Mesopotamia and the earlier Palestine campaign. Campaigns

smothered at their inception by a lack of concerted plan, impaired by quarrels as to command and a refusal to subordinate troops to a foreign commander. By landings and offensives carried out too late to have the desired effect. By forces unsupplied with efficient Commanders, men and equipment because all had their eyes upon the front in France. Such campaigns started without proper calculation and each ended in a deadlock as complete as that in France. Hastily started and doomed to defeat. Gallant improvisations . . . to succeed we must start our arrangements in time of peace.'

Slightly less than five months of peace then remained, and there is no doubt that the General was reflecting and resuming the viewpoint and the anxieties of all British and French commands in the Mediterranean. Not long before, he was sent at a day's notice to command in chief in the Middle East, where he had been able to bring his local knowledge up to date and to survey the scene anew. More important for present purposes, he had only just returned to Gibraltar from a second visit in the span of a few weeks to General Noguès, French Resident and Commander-in-Chief in Morocco. For this soldier was to have commanded throughout French North Africa had the war developed locally, as expected. He was to have been Commander-in-Chief in this vital region, extending an arm across Libya to General Wavell, in Egypt, who would have in turn connected with General Weygand, the dark horse of the Levant.

That General Noguès did not have to exercise this function scarcely invalidates his inclusion among the leading champions of the Allies, unknown as he may be to the British public. He still stands sentinel in Morocco, and we do not know what the future may hold for the 1,500 miles separating Atlantic rollers from Libyan scrub, and stretching dizzily back into Saharan sand. All we know is that if Mussolini ever did contemplate 'going in with Germany'

to the extent of risking Nazis alongside Fascists in North Africa, such union has not yet materialized. Whether the Nazi-Soviet deal was too much for the Duce to digest; whether, without it, this calculating Italian had reckoned what war in the Mediterranean would mean to Italy, whoever else suffered with her, on such questions none can pronounce with any certainty. The North African act may be resting in the womb of time, and that is why it would have been an error not to include the most representative Allied figure in these regions. Nor need the fact that he is another Frenchman disturb the balance of this book, in view of the compact nature of Franco-British unity.

Before making closer acquaintance with a soldier-administrator announcing 'I shall march in the tracks of Marshal Lyautey who formed my doctrine', it is desirable to make one point clear. When we hear of 'France's Colonial Army' or of the Colonial Minister Mandel's extraction of maximum warring worth from the French overseas Empire, that has nothing to do with French North Africa. The Colonial Army and the Army of North Africa are two quite separate institutions. If they meet in this war, that is because the higher strategy has caused us to mobilize a big army in Syria, under General Weygand. The bulk of that army came from Noguès' territory. In passing, Mandel represents one of the major personal forces of the Allies and it would be rash to guess how many hundreds of thousands he has already made sure of, as fighting material, from Indo-China and Tonkin, Madagascar, West and Equatorial Africa, the West Indies, the French Sudan, the Ivory Coast, the Upper Volta, mandated Togoland and the Cameroons, and Senegal.

It is really simpler to contemplate French North Africa as a prolongation of Europe. Algeria with its 7,000,000 native-born and 1,000,000 Europeans, its capital that is a louder and more eastern Marseilles, is politically part of

France proper, being divided into three departments sending deputies to the Paris Chamber. Tunisia is hardly less Occidentalized through its very propinquity to Europe—eighty miles, half an hour's flight. Though only a dozen miles distant (Ceuta), Morocco has resisted westernization the longest. In Fez, a year ago, I felt every bit as far east as in Baghdad twenty-two years before. There is a saying, 'Tunisia is a woman, Algeria is a man, but Morocco is a lion'. Inhabiting the least wild and mountainous country of the three, Tunisians are of an easy-going nature and the most cosmopolitan. Algeria has had over a century of French presence and is growing to a new manhood strongly influenced by the French language, French clothes and ways of life. Morocco, farthest from the Orient, is the most eastern of the three, also the least tamed. Yet one binding link operates: a common devotion to Islam.

The three like to visualize themselves as an Islamic island cut off from their co-religionists. 'El Jezirah el Maghreb'—the Island of the West. On three sides this island is surrounded by water and on the other by sand. If, therefore, one of the pleasant surprises of this war has been the manner in which Islam has opted for the Allies, most positive expression of this is to be found in French North Africa whose coloured millions contemplate a spread of totalitarian war success as the worst white threat since the abolition of slavery. Did France and Britain fail, these sons of the Prophet believe they would fall under a new form of slavery. Wherefore their unanticipated quiescence, even ready willingness to support France and to serve under the tricolour. They may and do complain of French rule, but know it to be benign compared with what might be; so France can count on the vast resources in minerals, food and manpower of a region five times her own size.

The army that General Noguès could assemble would be the first of its kind in history. A brand of Christian-

Mahometan crusading force against the recognized evil of the day, led by whites and stiffened by them in a proportion of maybe one white to eight or ten coloured. An estimate of a million might not be excessive, taking into account several hundred thousand irregulars or *goumiers*. At the core of things, the picturesque, debonair and hard-bitten Army of Africa, forcing-ground of famous generals, engrained in its units the spirit of the guerrilla with which an armed peace has been brought to fertile lands by means of a thousand little epics of the *bled*, by forced marches over burning sands, body to body fighting in palm groves, through defiles and on bleak crags, stormings of earthen-red forts; and ever in the wake of the fighting, the building of roads, camps, fortifications. In early 1939 some doubt existed as to the future of the Foreign Legion, and on enquiring why, one learnt that it was becoming dangerously unoccupied. No more 'little wars', not even much more building, so far as could be seen. North Africa had been too lavishly constructed, as it was, and the only form of building on the skyline was road construction of which the Legion had had a bellyful. In fact, there was serious talk of this fabled corps being disbanded. The war set that right, yet Hollywood and the Beau Geste school should be warned: they may yet have to make an offer to the French Government aimed at the Legion's preservation.

It does not matter precisely how or where the Army of Africa is situate at the moment. The point is that much of it could rally to its own broad *bled* in an emergency. It would be strung out the whole way from Casablanca to the Mareth Line, abutting upon Libya, while its fringes would skirt the heart of Africa along thousands of kilometres—' *Régions du Sud* ' fifty degrees in the shade sometimes, yet the only locality for your truly bitten 'Saharan'.

This army would rally as one entity from the three French-ruled territories; that would be the new thing. Its

principal components in order of seniority are the Chasseurs d'Afrique, that led the way for Marshal Bugeaud's conquest of Algeria and later had Ouida as godmother; the Zouaves and Turcos, also pioneers; the Spahis, native horse in flowing burnous; the Tirailleurs or riflemen forming the basic units of Algerian, Tunisian and Moroccan enrolment; the Foreign Legion; the Camel Corps, riding dromedaries in touch with the last, fierce unpacified ones; the 'Zephyrs' or '*bats d'Af*', a light infantry, white and coloured, such as only France could produce, since all are ex-criminals and not a few serve their sentences in the ranks. To these staple forces must be added the *Goumiers* and the Senegalese. The former are irregular volunteers who like to kill legally. They are paid for their services and for the keep of their mounts and they delight in the sack-like 'uniforms' granted them by the Republic. Their women and children follow them about in mobile camps or douars. As for the 'Sidis' from Senegal, these coal-black fellows are the most reliable for policing purposes, being impervious to Pan-Islamic or any other propaganda. They owe their origin to the abolition of slavery under Napoleon III, whose most successful soldier, Faidherbe, then on the West Coast, recruited regiments from liberated blacks not knowing where to turn. Their greatest achievement was to hold Morocco for Lyautey throughout the last war, 20,000 of them, the while double that number fought in France. Nearer 100,000 'Sidis' could now join the Army of Africa, forming a shock material of fearsome enough texture.

This Army requires to be visualized as very up-to-date, with an artillery corps of its own, tanks and armoured cars in profusion, and an African-broken air force under General Bouscat, Vuillemin's second in command on the *Croisière Noir*, that could be reinforced in a few hours from the flying-pool in Morocco. Above all, attention has been given to communications the success or failure of which could

determine the issue of a North African campaign. Roads and railways enabling the quickest concentrations to be made are imperative, and such are still in process of elaboration, including duplicate systems. For example, lest ill befell the trunk railway winding from Casablanca across to Southern Tunisia, a duplicating 'boulevard' has been built roughly parallel to it but much further south; in fact, its midway Algerian link is at Colomb Bechar, hundreds of miles from the Mediterranean coast and last town before the real Sahara. But to reach this traversing 'boulevard', which in places climbs 12,000 feet—that has been a problem as regards the far South. The solution is believed to lie in giant lorries ploughing their way northward across the desert from the Niger Valley, from Lake Tchad and from Senegal, vast regions providing another great reservoir of man-power. But I give the dimensions of the monsters under reserve: 130 feet long by 22 feet wide, running on 128 wheels, and each capable of carrying several hundred men. Yet what is not possible in the way of mechanical monstrosity in this heroic age of misguided application?

The man holding the reins of all this works in the most attractive government setting one remembers having seen. Lyautey's fever for building, but without disfiguring the existing Moorish scene and architecture, achieved heights of great beauty at Rabat. On a hillside thick with tropical vegetation of all kinds, carpeted with flowers, General Noguès presides at the head of two thousand functionaries, military and civil. Corbusier laid out the district, and not a bungalow, villa or administrative building, of which there are hundreds, not a curve or a sweep of roadway, but has been made to unite artistically with the whole. Lyautey loved this Hill of St. Helène, he laid out exotic gardens and carried the blending of Moorish and modern to its happiest expression on its slopes, and here he lies buried in the nearest thing to a Marabout's tomb that the Catholic

Church deemed suitable. An inscription on the grave tells in curious detail about the last sacraments having been administered; a second, in Arabic, of Lyautey's profound respect for the Moslem faith. The passer-by might be tempted to add a third inscription: 'He loved Morocco as a woman, decorating her feverishly yet fastidiously until restrained by the economic factor; the lover had been too precipitate and lavish but time will correct the legacy of his devotion.'

In declaring that he meant to follow in the footsteps of the Marshal, General Noguès was far from foreshadowing a revival of costly and superfluous construction and embellishment. He implied that he intended borrowing the cardinal tenets of his master's rule, and reviving something of the vanished Lyautey pomp. There had been a run of civilian Residents and the natives had got into slack ways of respecting the '*fracks*' who, nevertheless, personified France. It was all very well for Paris to shrug its shoulders at Lyautey's white charger and light blue great-coat, at the *éclat* of his escort and the magnificence of his fêtes, yet that was the way things became facilitated with the natives. General Noguès promptly revived the pomp and colour and dazzling receptions, and if he has not the presence of the Marshal he is anything but a pale substitute. Trim and dapper, he is at his ease in social ambience and more erudite and artistic—a fine pianist—than any guest he is likely to encounter. Support comes from Madame la Générale, a daughter of the great Delcassé and, not surprisingly, of a keen intellect herself.

The General's method, then, is firstly to rely on the moral and religious authority of the Sultan, and secondly to maintain the power of the chiefs while bringing their authority within limits and preserving that of the State. In this manner did Lyautey indicate that the *pax Gallica* could be made to stand for orderly development, justice, education, hygiene,

and Noguès the disciple has gone ahead with it. He has also demonstrated that he intends to have a free hand or quit. Not that there is any chance of a split with Paris so long as M. Daladier is in command. Actually, it was Daladier who fought to get Noguès to Morocco in 1936, and fought harder to keep him there when the new Resident began to display the firm hand.

A large and powerful French opinion will not tolerate a soldier becoming too great a force or too popular in time of peace. Lyautey was becoming that way after the Great War, and just as soon as he stumbled—over Krim—he was ousted. Not only that, but the maker of modern Morocco was suffered to leave the land he had transformed as with a wand, without a salute or an escort or a flag flying. The only departing salute he received was from a couple of destroyers dispatched from Gibraltar, and the Marshal never forgot those British cheers at sea, the only ones.

General Noguès came close to experiencing a like fate at the very outset of his consulship (1936). Rebellion was brewing in Fez, holy city, that might spread throughout North Africa, so carefully and powerfully had the blow been prepared. There was only one thing to do: arrest the ringleaders. Yet the greatest care would have to be taken not to queer matters by arresting friends of the Sultan. In order to obviate this the new Resident had recourse to stratagem. He sought an audience and in the course of conversation with young Sidi Mahommed, mentioned this and that chief, as if casually. What did his Majesty think of him? Thus it went on until a list which the General had committed to memory was exhausted; and as each chief was well or badly spoken of, by the Sultan, an A.D.C. in an alcove made a corresponding note. And that audience was scarcely over before the telephone wires to Fez and in other directions buzzed with the names of all the leaders who could with safety be apprehended. The great plot was

nipped in the bud. But there was a strong Paris campaign to remove the General on account of his illiberal procedure.

General Noguès is a Pyreneean, born sixty-three years ago, who passed through the French Woolwich at the end of last century and after a time with a battery was posted to the army survey. He spent most of his subaltern service surveying in North Africa, and the knowledge thus acquired of the territory no less than of native life proved to be his making. When the French decided that Morocco should be all theirs, War Minister Millerand sent out Lyautey, who soon applied for the thirty-six-year-old geodesy expert on the principle of only employing on his staff men actually taking an interest and a pleasure in mixing with the native population, from Pasha and Caid down. When I was in Rabat during 1939 crisis, the disciple at the Residency promulgated a dahir showing how well he had remembered this. This called on his compatriots to learn Moorish Arabic with intensive method so that a term should be called to a situation by which so many French colonists' only speaking contact with all save a small proportion of French-speaking Moors was the command staccato. French adults were exhorted to learn by wireless; as for the children, permanent Moorish Arabic classes were initiated in all schools. Without much doubt General Noguès is of those foreseeing the eventual emergence of an entirely new Eurafrican state along the North African coast and he wishes to make sure that French civilization shall be on top in the white impregnation thereof. Meanwhile, his 'Big Brother' policy of bringing French and native-born into closer relationship strengthens the Administration and its economy by promotion of a more mutually comprehending effort by the two races.

The General can rank as an 'old Moroccan' in the sense that he participated in the 'heroic' years that followed the Fez massacres of French officers in 1911. The treacherous

Mouley Hafid had to be manœuvred out, and Captain Noguès was among a sprinkling of officers for native affairs—Intelligence Officers—posted to extremely unhealthy Fez for purposes attendant on the transition to Mouley Youssef, father of the present Sultan. At one point Lyautey and his staff were shut in the murderous city, when all papers and documents were burnt and revolvers examined. It would be a last stand and then—better not fall into those fellows' hands alive!

Captain Noguès contrived to work for his chief with a minimum of friction although the older man had little in common with his junior save a pronounced artistic predilection. Lyautey would spring into the wildest and most unjust tempers, almost immediately regretted, whereas Noguès rarely turned a hair. He remains a reserved man, even on the cold side. A measure of this is certainly due to the loss of his only child a few years ago. The father had married late in life, and this boy left the memory of a very wideawake, gay and likeable child.

Noguès served through 1914–18 commanding regiments of heavy artillery in France, emerging a Lt.-Colonel with five citations; normal, combatant officer's campaign interrupted by a hectic spell as military secretary to Lyautey when this brilliant fire-eater was recalled to the War Ministry in dark 1917. It was a false move; Lyautey began Cromwellian conduct with the Chamber and soon was on his way back to Morocco; but it meant an unexpected subsequent six months at G.H.Q. for the diplomatic Noguès, who had to smooth what had become distinctly rumpled relations with Paris. It is interesting to note that hardly had peace returned when he passed to a second personage of dictatorial bent. M. Millerand was sent as first Commissioner-General to recovered Alsace, quickly stirred things the wrong way there by his difficult disposition, and applied for the suave Noguès to aid in righting matters. Part of this

righting took the form of a Press trip from Paris to Alsace in early March, 1919. Wangling a pass, I went there still in uniform, and as this was the first British officer the Alsacians—and the *Alsaciennes*—had set eyes on, the visit assumed considerable merit viewed strictly from the personal side. At a torchlight affair following a Millerand banquet, Military Secretary Noguès pointed out what was what in the patriotic parade.

When Millerand was elected to the Elysée, he made his favourite soldier chief of his military household, and if General Noguès ever writes his memoirs he should have something to say of the fireworks that followed, notorious chapter in the story of the Third Republic. The President sought to introduce authoritarianism at a time when this form was yet foreign even to Rome, and on the parties of the Left flooding into power in 1924, they forced the First Magistrate to resign; nor is there much doubt but they were right, inasmuch as the ex-President has hardly been heard from since. He went back to the Bar, and not so strongly.

The Colonel's time at the Elysée left pleasanter memories; he was married from there.

Théophile Delcassé had been found dead in a Toulon churchyard a year or two before; there would have been a touch of poetic justice in his survival to witness a son-in-law's rise to chieftaincy of that Morocco over which he had to resign as Foreign Minister at the demand of the Kaiser.

This rise set in when Colonel Noguès was given command of the North Fez district the winter before Abd-el-Krim's revolt. Had the isolated and small French posts in the savage and hostile country surrounding Fez failed to exercise a salutary influence on the tribes, had defection among these permitted the Riffians to filter into the holy city, this would have risen murderously and given the signal for widespread revolt through North Africa. That the tribes remained, if not loyal, at any rate passive, was greatly

due to indefatigable spadework against time, that menacing winter, by Colonels Freydenberg and Noguès, who circulated in all directions taking the tribal temperatures, and kidding the Moors along with circumstantial stories of formidable French strength. In the sequel, the frail rampart held. And Colonel Noguès was to be a familiar figure at all actions along his front in the succeeding year of battle. Horses are his second love after music, and he secured some stunners for himself, standard-bearer and escort, flashing company intended to impress.

The same elegant cavalier was to grace Fontainebleau forest during a lengthy appointment as head of the Artillery School, after which it was back to Fez again, now in charge of the crucial department of Native Affairs. From the Residency in the lovely Batha Museum, even a more seductive setting than the principal Residency at Rabat, General Noguès lent a vital hand in the final pacification of Morocco. His Native Affairs officers were, and are, the mainstays of the French administrative system. Established singly in blockhouses, they range into the most perilous depths of the country, and there must be hundreds of them. They require to be part hermit, part escapist, wholly 'African', of great physical and mental endurance, in order not to crumple in their protracted loneliness. Officially, their job is to keep a finger on the native pulse; in fact they emerge as judge, doctor, builder, engineer, agricultural expert, business manager, guide and councillor for their tribal element. They *are* French Morocco. The General was left long enough at their head to assimilate ultimate knowledge of the native-born prior to being called to command the 10th Division of Paris, which he made 'a model division', and the 19th Corps at Algiers, basic instrument of Algerian military service. He had been noted as a coming leader. Such experience was essential, and it conducted to the specially created post of Inspector-General of the North

African forces, last lap before control of Morocco and crystallization of the command in chief for all French North Africa in case of war.

‘Lyautey the Second’—the General would bristle if he heard it, but there is sufficient substance—believes in putting up a brilliant show. ‘He is to be seen on all sides; he changes his uniform thrice daily, gives receptions, attends diffas, goes on inspection, visits schools, motors from medina to medina.’ And, when the occasion demands, flies round French North Africa in his own aeroplane. He has his hand on the far-distant Mareth Line, as on the confines of the Spanish Rio d’Oro, bordering the Atlantic. The endless Saharan fringe is his frontier to the south, the Mediterranean coast on the north. He must think always of his oceanic background, from Dakar right up to Brest interests him, and specifically of the sea link with Bordeaux lest that with Marseilles should be jeopardized. He has in Morocco the nearest French equivalent to our Canada air training scheme. He has to keep up reserves for Syria. He has an evacuee arrangement about Gibraltar. Without much stretch of the imagination General Noguès can be regarded as a part British sentinel, for nowhere more than in his area—unless it should prove Weygand’s which is part Noguès’s—could a combined French and British strategy in defence of common interests and prestige spring more efficaciously into being. That the Mediterranean has not caught fire (at this writing) alters nothing of the wisdom or necessity of contacts such as General Ironside established with Rabat during his governorship of the Rock. The General’s opinion of his French opposite number was direct. ‘First class.’

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE BROKEN LANCE

ONE DESPERATE DAY COLONEL PELMOWSKY'S REGIMENT OF Polish Lancers attacked a mechanized column commanded by the German Colonel Deener. It was in front of Warsaw, and the action turned inevitably as it was bound to do: slaughter of the charging horsemen and their mounts. The Polish survivors would rally in a wood whence they debouched several times in ever-thinning numbers. A last rally had this extraordinary about it—when the charging cavalry broke cover, it was seen that the points of their lances gave off smoke and flame. What was this? The Poles had spiked oil-soaked pieces of cloth, lighted them, and intended trying to thrust their burning lance tips through the ventilators of the German tanks, most inflammable of contraptions. Of sixty Lancers riding on this final throw, one succeeded and none came back.

Listening to a French Cabinet Minister, M. de Monzie, broadcasting the above from an official dispatch, I was transplanted in the mind's eye to an April morning of 1915 in the grounds of the Château Czartoryski, at Novo Alexandrovno on the Vistula. Specially for a British correspondent's benefit, Colonel Reutt was again parading the first three hundred of a Polish Legion to be incorporated with the Russians. Slim, wiry, bewhiskered young men, for the most part, with trailing swords, they were clad in the Polish national uniform of a century before, claret and black copiously decorated with gold lace. Cavalry without horses, all the morning they wheeled and turned and formed fours and marked time, bugles blowing and standards waving. The daughter of the regiment, vivacious little Helena Reuttnoida, marched in uniform beside her father at the head of the column. And afterwards at lunch in the officers' mess, when many pretty words were said and toasts drunk, the Colonel's wife sat at her husband's right.

A slim, pale, beautiful Russian woman, she seemed to impose her will on the whole company and no one talked without first glancing in her direction, mutely submissive.

That day I thought how preposterous was cavalry thus armed and clad in a war already proclaimed as one of mud, trenches, obstacles and fire-power. The notion that nearly a quarter of a century later I should be hearing of a suicide ride by Polish Lancers would have been equally preposterous. Yet here it was, over the wireless, and to make things more lunatic, the horsemen tilting at tanks in the open!

If the Polish lance lies broken, it never should have been suffered to endure in wood and steel this many a long day. The retention of forty cavalry regiments, to hide in woods and issue victoriously on Von Blaskowitz's motorized columns wallowing in the mud of Polish 'roads', was so much recklessly romantic, if not wanton playing with war, for which Marshal Smigly-Rydz has to answer, as for other things. By all previous showing, this chapter would have been his. I call your attention to the legend that grew up round this European figure. Incidentally, youth should make a point of examining legends through the microscope if it wishes to be preserved from some of the major ills that smote its elders. With press-agentry rampant, it needs the warning.

Between May 1935 and the outbreak of this war the since-deposed Marshal collected the designation 'Strong Man'. He was trumpeted as Poland's Idol and a military genius to boot (did he not win that twentieth decisive battle of the world, before Warsaw, against the Bolsheviks?—the number of people who 'won' that battle is growing). There seems to have been no ground for talk on such scale which was inspired by a totalitarian Press in order to boost stock in that 'government of colonels'—Beck & Co.—which so many Poles must retrospectively curse. Edward Rydz (meaning mushroom) won Pilsudski's notice in 1914 and



GENERAL SIKORSKI

went creditably and bravely through the war on the Austrian side of the line. He attracted rather more notice by mopping-up ill-armed Bolsheviks in the Baltic States, in 1919, but achieved little indicative of the arresting military leader, born or made. Edward Rydz was primarily an æsthete. He painted, collected, read poetry, in younger days had acted. As late as 1933 he was painting the Thames Embankment. But to his æstheticism was joined a remarkable agility by which he shone at tennis, swimming, astride a horse, in marksmanship. Because of this quickness of body as of wits, his comrades in the Pilsudski Legion gave him the soubriquet Smigly—pronounced Shmigwy and meaning nimble. Marshal Nimble-Mushroom, in fact.

One could make merry with the double-barrelled label in the light of this dictator's brief efflorescence and the swiftness of his moves on the Polish battlefield, yet the taste to do so is lacking. It may have been the Marshal's misfortune that he was picked by Pilsudski for the succession. Pertinent here, is the shock the forces of democracy sustained by the deflation of an unjustified legend. While the world without was led to visualize a Strong Silent Soldier endowed with the prime military virtues, a brilliant gift to Poland and well competent to defend her, glorious successor to Sobieski, Poniatowski, Kosciuszko, and all the rest of it, a peep inside the palace at Warsaw would have revealed a soft-spoken, retiring man in the fifties, domesticated, of scholarly bent though nothing remarkable, art still his forte, lacking the true ruler's punch as the true soldier's self-dedication, responsible in the past for relatively minor exploits compared with the business of tackling a Hitler, a Stalin, yet inflated by a totalitarian machine into glamorous man of destiny.

The fight an unled Poland contrived to put up for four weeks had high value for the western democracies inasmuch as it enabled France to mobilize in and behind her Maginot

Line without the expected severe interference, but Smigly-Rydz is hardly the one to bless for that.

In presenting the Marshal's successor, one owes it to the public to give references. In the case of General Ladislav Eugene Sikorski, these are Foch, Pétain and Weygand on the military side, and Painlevé, Herriot and Daladier on the political. With such a sextette, the reader may at least be sure that he is not making acquaintance with someone specially vamped up to meet the circumstances of a stripped Poland. Soldier, statesman, orator and writer, head of the Polish Government at Angers, and Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army in formation, Sikorski has for over half a life of fifty-eight years planned, fought and suffered for his native land. This is a man who actually has done big and real things. 'It's a crime,' ejaculated old Marshal Pétain at the outbreak of war, 'that they haven't given a command to Sikorski, for he's one of the best of contemporary generals—not only of Poland but of Europe!' Weygand cabled his good wishes from the Near East. In his *Souvenirs*, he had made it clear that Sikorski, and not he, won that decisive battle against the Bolsheviks. In the last preface he was to pen, Foch wrote of 'a leader in the full sense of the word', adding verbally: 'By a long way Poland's first general. He is no improvisator but a technician. They need more like him on the Vistula.'

General Sikorski's is a mind that has shone in the two realms necessary to his task: military science and strategy, and administrative statesmanship. All speak well of him. Except his enemies, who in his own country were those misguided ones deeming themselves a match for the wiles of a Hitler and a Stalin, who thought they could play the one against the other, and each against France and the West, for Poland to be conserved and even reinforced by the brilliant juggling. These men wanted, also, a totalitarian state on the German model and thought they could get

away with it under Hitler's nose. Their political conduct owed overmuch to Pilsudski the conspirator. A great old fellow, yet never really content unless conspiring over something. That was what set him playing tricks with the Western nations whose victory gave Poland back her all; as it was, at bottom, the cause of his dispensing with General Sikorski who never for an instant in the years after victory lost sight of the why and the wherefore of Poland's rebirth as a nation. The General stood by the French alliance and may be said to have fallen by it.

The Café de Flore at the end of the 'twenties was a bright spot. Next door to the *Deux Magots* ('Two Apes') in the Boulevard St Germain, it was the meeting-place of international writers and correspondents, and transatlantic tourists would rally there in hopes of staring at a Hemingway or a Duranty, a Ford Madox Ford or even a Joyce. If someone told them that the soldierly-looking fellow in grey sombrero was Sikorski, they asked who was he? And then: 'Oh, a Pole! We're not interested in Poles. Unless it's Madame Curie or Paderewski!' Not that the General noticed anything: he spent most of the time reading the foreign newspapers and when finished, rose and walked off, always very rapidly and straight before him. He lived in a small hotel in the rue Jacob, round the corner. He was writing hard then. He might have gone back to his old job of surveyor-engineer but felt a mission to carry on as spokesman of a democratic Poland that had been suppressed. Living on the Left Bank was not disagreeable to his Slav temperament if he seldom ventured into the cosmo-bohemian ranks which he might have graced with his distinction of presence and charm of manner. But that would have meant being drawn into the futile local wastage of group discussions. Sikorski preferred to reserve that kind of thing for social occasions, fruit of the esteem in which he was held by France's leading soldiers, when he would

seek to advance his country's stock by replying to critics, by clarification. The invitations he liked best were those from the marshals and generals who would pay return visits to the rue Jacob hotel in whose modest lounge sat at different times a Pétain, a Weygand, a Gamelin, and the bon vivant and erudite Herriot and Painlevé and the bon vivant Briand. Foch was failing, or he also would have passed that way.

General Sikorski's long sojourn in Paris was something of a calvary in that none realized better than he the deadly perils into which Poland was running. It wasn't alone instinct, it wasn't due to his oppositiveness of view to the colonels in charge: he simply had everything behind him by which to judge. Even the ultimate linking of Germans and Russians over yet another prostrate Poland was foreseen and put in print. The General became an active journalist, writing special articles, and for the reviews and magazines, on both sides of the Atlantic. His main work concerned his books, to the first of which, *The Russo-Polish War*, Foch wrote a preface recognizing 'the brilliant commander of the 5th Army'. Fulfilling a similar function for *The Problem of Peace*, Paul Painlevé rounded off his tribute with the words 'a precious guide for the future of Poland'. Marshal Pétain came forward for the last of the three works, *Modern War*: 'Nothing is equivocal in the author's case. Turning from racial theory that represents war as a fatal necessity to the human race, General Sikorski realistically seeks out the means by which peace may be preserved. In an ample and elevated study, he exposes with precision the multiple causes of war which threaten the world.'

Essentially, the General is a Polish Westerner, ever pointing to the crowning peril of a Bolshevik, semi-Asiatic, overrunning of Europe. If the Allies win, his width of view should be of high value in the attempt at the beginnings of some form of European federation. Admitted his

pronounced sympathy for the Western nations, he is none the less a European in the wide sense. He believes the nations of this Continent must be ready to make common sacrifices. Part of Poland's contribution to the new world would doubtless have to be a forgetting of her too extreme eastern frontier bordering on the U.S.S.R., which the General himself put through when Premier in 1923. A realist such as he, assuredly is mindful that Poland has got into the habit of dying and re-arising rather too often; that other nations have a right to see that her next boundaries are such as will not cause a fresh bout of smouldering envy and revengefulness on the part of neighbours, culminating in another explosion. Apart from the drawing of the eastern frontier, well understood to have emanated from a combined fear and detestation of the centuries-old tyrannical giant next door, General Sikorski can look anyone in the eyes and affirm that none of Warsaw's latterday efforts—such as the closing down of democratic rule, the ten-year deal with Hitler with its consequences in other directions, the encroachment on neighbours who should have been held as friends in likely need, and which found its insanest expression in the snatching of territory from a downed Czechoslovakia—were any of his doing, that, indeed, his published writings showed such policies and actions had his condemnation. One of the first things the new head of the Polish Government did, was to meet M. Beneš in Paris and bury the Polish-Czech past, and there should be a happy omen in the parallel training, in France, of Czech and Polish armies.

Ladislav Sikorski was born near Sandomierz, Austrian Poland, district that was to gain prominence in recent times under the cryptic style of 'Z.O.P.'. The Warsaw Government's belated idea was gradually to transfer to this area not only the war industry of the country but its entire industrial activity (Z.O.P., half created, is now in

German hands). Young Sikorski qualified as soldier at the Officers' School in Vienna, after which he took an engineering diploma at Lwow University. Until 1914 he practised his calling at Cracov and became in his secret time Pilsudski's organizing right hand. Pilsudski inspired. Sikorski, head of the Military Department, set the first cadres of Poland's Legions on their feet. By 1918 he had advanced to be colonel, charged with the defence of Lemberg. Still fighting under the Austrian Eagles, very different ideas lay submerged in his mind. The following year was to set them free. Sikorski commanded the Polish army whose victorious advance and calculated withdrawal made it possible for Pilsudski to throw the Bolsheviks back on Kiev and beyond. In 1920 the General came into his own at the head of the 5th Army which won that twentieth decisive victory in military history. The victor was thirty-eight.

It had been a strange war. Whenever a battle looked probable, one side or the other would execute a strategic retreat—and there would be no battle. Finally, however, things became very menacing and General Weygand was sent out at the head of a military mission. On arrival, he learnt that Sikorski was expected to bear the brunt of the attack by Tukhachevsky, and at once ordered staff officers to go to 5th Army H.Q. and find out exactly how the position lay. But before these officers had time to leave, Sikorski appeared unexpectedly. He had made contact with the enemy all along his front in order to ascertain the Bolshevik order of battle, and Weygand was greatly struck by the young general's initiative in coming into headquarters off his own bat, and by the clear and precise answers he gave to questions. It was at this interview that France's contribution to the imminent victory was mainly made. Weygand transmitted Foch's general directives, as these had been worked out over maps and data in Paris,

and completed them with his own appreciation on the spot. And Sikorski saluted and was gone (of course there were others present, but Weygand is clear that Sikorski was his man that day).

The 5th Army first stopped the converging Soviet offensive at Modlin, hub Vistula fortress protecting Warsaw. Three Bolshevik corps made no headway against a lesser Polish strength. Immediately transferred to command the 3rd Army, which faced the next Russian threat, Sikorski achieved military glory in a day by routing the attacking cavalry formations of the much-trumpeted Boudienny. This rout led to a retirement in confusion and the Poles leapt ahead, reducing the enemy to lamentable bits and pieces. It was a famous victory, and one that caused Europe and the world to breathe more freely at the time. It revealed the Soviet colossus as having feet of clay, militarily at any rate. Wrote Foch, using the historical present: 'The 5th Army is commanded by a leader in the full sense of the word, and we witness tactical results fructifying and expanding from a correct conception rationally applied and succeeded by a violent execution.'

Promoted Chief of the General Staff, the victor occupied this post when the Polish President Narutowicz was murdered and disruption menaced the regime. The soldier was made Prime Minister and in a few weeks had quelled the turmoil. From then onwards Sikorski's first love was the building up of a new Polish Army on a modern basis. France should be his model, and Foch paid a triumphant visit to Warsaw to inspect his pupil's work. Foundations of a war industry were also laid. How well the soldier-statesman succeeded was testified in 1925 when Generals Ironside, Graziani and Gouraud attended the Polish manœuvres. But Poland was approaching the end of another chapter, an all too brief one, in her chequered history. The days in office of her young regenerator were

numbered. Out of the dark came the Pilsudski *coup d'état* of May 1926, and Sikorski was relegated to the Lemberg command; and even lost that in 1928, whereupon he decided the rue Jacob would be healthier.

Pilsudski remains a Polish hero for the ages and so he doubtless is for General Sikorski, whose divergence from the Marshal was one of those occurrences proving tragic for a whole people. One does not need to praise the man of the present and criticize the illustrious dead in order to set things justly in perspective. Pilsudski had no use for liberalism, he was an 'Easterner', and a plotter. Had Sikorski been likewise, at least had he agreed about the two first, he would in all likelihood have been the Marshal's white-headed boy. He was not, and when it came to Poles standing for the colourful and dynamic old patriot or the lieutenant who was essaying to mould a democratic Poland in touch with the West, they soon allowed themselves to be won by the aura of the older man. Pilsudski could not be wrong! He had given them back their country, he would protect it from any danger! One of those unfortunate mob ways of thought. And when, on Pilsudski's death, the Poles might have recovered a safer national policy, as the majority would have preferred to do, that step was rendered impossible by the immediate elevation of the men named in the Marshal's testament. And the dictatorship went on, only now bereft of the Pilsudski aura. Of the substitute aura, I have perhaps written sufficiently.

As Beck's Hitler-policy showed ever bigger crevasses, the chances rose of General Sikorski being able to return to Warsaw. Eventually he reappeared there, and entered on a memorable association with the *Kurjer Warszawski*, in whose columns he maintained his doctrine, sometimes at much personal risk. In particular, he never lost an opportunity of pointing to France as Poland's historical friend and as the source of her military strength. Alas, it was then too late.

The die had been cast. Hitler had to be faced in all his frightfulness. Nor was Sikorski the proven strategist allowed to participate in any form during the four weeks of Poland's disruption on the battlefield. The soldier who saved Warsaw from the Bolsheviks was sunk out of sight in the dreadful turmoil, when he very surely could have put up a far better and more protracted fight than Smigly-Rydz's, had he been given an active command. While the 'government of colonels' was making its way towards Romanian internment—one does not recall having heard of a solitary Smigly-Rydz G.H.Q. in operation throughout the brief campaign, 'Stefan the Stubborn' emerging instead, as Mayor of Warsaw—General Sikorski bent every effort to escape from Poland and arrive in France in time to set up a new and recognized Polish Government before Hitler got in with a Polish 'Hacha', or puppet administration. The importance of accomplishing this was great and Sikorski succeeded. On the last day of September, forty-eight hours after Warsaw had surrendered but while the Germans had not yet entered, an historic little company met in the rue Jacob and the Polish Republic became legally transferred to French soil. Those present that day were President Raczkiewicz, Premier and Generalissimo Sikorski, Vice-Premier Stronski, Foreign Minister Zaleski, and Colonel Koc in charge of finance that included the bulk of Poland's gold reserve flown from Warsaw across Scandinavia. In the background, the Peasant leader Witos and the failing but still burning Paderewski. In his first proclamation General Sikorski engaged all Poles 'before Paderewski, living symbol of the Polish soul', to serve to the uttermost. In the original issue of the *Monitor Polski*, he as good as shook free of Poland's immediate political past while announcing that it would be time enough later to pronounce upon 'the divers causes that brought about the occupation of our country by the Russians

and Germans'. Smigly-Rydz was at the same time dismissed.

One can only look towards Angers, seat of the Sikorski Government, as once one thought of St Adresse, Havre waterfront suburb where an uprooted Belgian Government carried on from 1914 to 1918; to return in triumph at the end to a liberated kingdom.

President Raczkiewicz is installed in an Anjevin château five miles from the town : his presence is much of a formality. It is in a couple of mansions facing one another on the Avenue Foch, in Angers, that the business of Poland's renascence pushes ahead. They are pretty grim and glacial old mansions, but the best available in this Fleur de Lys stronghold. One is the address of General Sikorski. In the other works M. Zaleski, at the head of a Foreign Office staff of eight. Yet the most important fact about this interim Government is that it is widely recognized, and that many ministers and ambassadors have taken up residence in Angers.

Sikorski is not much in Angers. Having given himself to the re-arising Army, he is usually far away in the Southwest. The new Polish Army may hit a long and winding trail in the effort to regain Warsaw. That depends on Allied strategy. Its numbers will long be indeterminate, with eight million Poles scattered round the earth and the duty of enlistment ever calling. The big Polish colony in France cannot supply unlimited man-power owing to no fewer than a hundred and fifty thousand Poles being employed in French war industry, mostly in the coal-mines of the North.

Upon one thing Poles may congratulate themselves. If anyone is capable of rescuing some form of new Poland from the clutches of the present conquering pair, that man can be none other than Ladislas Sikorski.

CHAPTER NINE

THE MAN WHO WAS RIGHT

THREE LEADING FIGURES OF THE GREAT WAR CAME THROUGH to be leaders in its successor: Maxime Weygand, Jan Smuts and Winston Churchill. Three others are still active though in emeritus style: Marshal Pétain, Mr Lloyd George, Mr W. M. Hughes. A further five are nebulously out or retired: the ex-Kaiser, 'Little Willie', General Pershing, Field-Marshal von Mackensen, Trotsky. Such seems to be roundly the survival story, with Mr Churchill, third youngest, standing a good chance of being the last survivor of all.

As we think of Palmerston, Disraeli and Gladstone in connection with the second half of the nineteenth century, so should oncoming generations associate Lloyd George and Churchill, and perhaps A. N. Other to come, with the first half of the twentieth. Especially Mr Churchill, who from 1900 into the 'forties never ceased to be an active possibility or a force in office whereas his friend, Premier and senior, began to dim early—in 1922.

'In 1939,' posterity may decide, 'Winston Churchill was summoned to a bigger job than he had ever held. And he had held them all save the Premiership and Foreign Office. The man who was too clever to be trusted was at the outbreak of the Second Great War called by the instinctive trust of the British people to occupy a position which made of him the synthesis in Nazi Germany's eyes of what had to be beaten to the ground. He was given the Navy, which had still first to be vanquished before the British Empire could be smashed. The First Lord's personality was envisaged by the King's enemies as an impediment to the realization of their plans. The Churchillian imperial faith, that had become almost a religion, was accompanied by a power, a courage, an ability to defend it. The Nazis knew this fellow who took bloody steaks and No. 1 Bass

for *petit déjeuner* was up to most of their tricks before they played them; that foreseeing, he was the better able to protect. . . .

But why bestow more of this golden prose upon hypothetical pens of the future? This form is becoming overworked, anyway, and there is plenty to be perceived and said concerning Mr Churchill, from the viewpoint of his contemporaries. One sees three principal reasons as operative in making him the Briton of the Day on the outbreak of war:

1. He had been proved right. This seemed to demolish two chief arguments for keeping him out of the Government, namely, that he lacked judgement and was unstable and inconsistent. What more consistent or stable, what showed better judgement than his year after year pointing to the Nazis, with the admonition 'Beware, for they mean to down you!' Or his reiterated 'Thank God for the French Army'? As war was breaking, he could resuscitate it all in *Step by Step*, the story of how he had consistently foreseen and warned. *Punch* had caricatured some of this process as 'the Fat Boy trying to make our flesh creep', yet now in September (1939) it looked as if it would have been a good thing if a little more flesh *had* crept. 'Winston' stood in relief against past muddle-headed complacency, half-measures, misplaced placating, general fumbling in foreign affairs, of three National Governments. 'The many extraordinary errors and follies by which upon a pavement of good intentions the once victorious Allies descended again into the pit,' to quote a phrase of Mr Churchill's in defending Mr Eden. Its author then left no doubt as to the identity, in his eyes, of Responsible No. 1. Mr Baldwin 'had long held the power' before succeeding, in 1935, to the failing MacDonald, and the rot really started in late 1933, when Hitler left the League and broke with the disarmament clauses of Versailles. 'It was evident that the

sunshine days were over, and that a new intense struggle impended between Europe and the terrible warlike race which after measureless sacrifices and losses had been compelled to lay down its arms in 1918.' Then was the time—if not for a 'preventive' war; that was 'immoral'; and, besides, France was hardly more accessible to the idea than ourselves—then was the time to start buckling on our armour! But 'British Cabinets believed that all would come right if we showed ourselves willing to placate the Dictators' and 'those who doubted that such policy would succeed were branded as warmongers.' The legacy of military unpreparedness bequeathed by four years of Baldwinism (1933-7) to Mr Chamberlain's Administration assuredly hindered a bolder front being shown to aggression in the final period. Yet the new Premier had himself supported Baldwin's hesitant half-measures, and very soon embarked upon an intensive personal policy of appeasement that was to garner little, unless it advanced a 'we are not to blame' posture and gained time. To think of all the time the Allies had had to squander; which, in effect, they did.

Now that the worst had happened, a good many people wanted Churchill in office simply because Hitler had sought to keep him out as a 'warmonger', the truth of course being that Hitler wished Churchill to have no hand in assuring Britain's shield at any rate until such time as Germany was ready to strike at her selected opponent in chief. There were those in the British Cabinet who helped Hitler's plan by taking the line that Mr Churchill's inclusion would make war more likely and that anyway he was essentially a 'war' minister, not a peace-time one; faulty reasoning which led among other things to naval preparedness not being sharpened in all spheres to the pitch it might have reached for the delicate opening phase, had the right man been at the Admiralty some time before war broke

out. If people didn't 'sense' all of this, they 'sensed' most of it. They also wanted Mr Churchill because if he had to put up his fists, well, his temperament had always been that of the happy warrior, and because his presence in the Government would be a guarantee of utmost war-waging. At the first sign of any revival of monkey tricks Winston would resign—of so much the public was sure.

2. Mr Churchill had had a raw deal in the past. The public had suspected this for quite a while but it needed the re-fixing of the spotlight upon him in his role of Cassandra, leading to re-examination of his career, to nail at their just worth certain charges against one who had, admittedly, been an overpowering, go-getting personality. These charges could be approached under five heads: Turncoat, Antwerp, Dardanelles, Archangel, Gold Standard.

The first dated back to archaic political times when the young Churchill crossed from the Conservatives to the Liberals. That kind of conduct sparked rage and contempt in a bygone day, but what did it matter *now*, and wasn't there a great deal in what Winston said, that he had been more consistent than political parties and programmes, and anyway and moreover the notion that public men should stick rigorously through life to the faith of their fathers was a nonsensical denial of the right of the human mind to function as it thought fit.

With regard to Antwerp, it was young and impulsive, some said showy, for a First Lord to dash off there, but the British casualties were trifling compared with the good that resulted from the appearance in the flesh at long last of Allied uniforms in Belgium. If the Belgian resistance was here and there not as strong as it might have been, absence of French or British soldiers in those upside-down weeks was no minor cause. That state of affairs was belatedly mitigated by the Naval Brigade's arrival in London motor-buses at invested Antwerp, as no less a one than King

Albert was to place on record in writing. That the King was able to conduct an army of seventy thousand across his overrun land to the mouth of the Yser he attributed partly to the Churchillian intervention which, had it passed without two thousand of the Brigade being mistakenly or purposely led over into Holland, and being interned there, would have been as paying an operation as any in the war, for it had the further effect of causing the German Command to think again at a crucial moment, when every hour thus spent in fresh cogitation was of value to the Allies. Armchair critics in England disagreed heartily with all this and refused to believe what eye-witnesses (as the writer) narrated, but gradually the facts percolated, and to 'Winston's' advantage. Many of his critics had in reality not stopped thinking of that turncoat business, and some die-hards are at it yet, if they but had it out with themselves.

The Dardanelles campaign has passed finally into history as 'brilliantly conceived but weakly executed'. First, therefore, it is meet to consider who conceived it. Had it succeeded, and shortened the war as it was bound to do, its inceptor would doubtless have been figuratively given a second Blenheim by a jubilant and grateful nation. It came within immediate sight of success, maybe a mountain top deciding. For the reasons of failure, one cannot do better than hearken back to the present Chief of the Imperial General Staff's warning against 'campaigns smothered at their inception by a lack of concerted plan, impaired by quarrels as to command . . . by landings and offensives carried out too late to have the desired effect'.

'Can we not aim,' General Ironside drove home, 'at such a campaign as that of Allenby in Palestine, with a determination to push it through from the Government behind?'

It is a sure thing that such was what Mr Churchill did aim at but without the lesson-to-come to guide him, and

handicapped by Lords Fisher and Kitchener being either grumpily against or only half-heartedly for the Dardanelles attempt. After all, the First Lord had to be responsible for the Navy on the seven seas, besides looking to this specific Near East child of his brain, and in the long run the British public concluded that it was a bit steep to bracket the onus of failure with one departmental chief who had brilliantly conceived the original scheme.

It is apt to be overlooked that the dispatch of a force to Archangel was not in the first case a move against Bolshevik Russia but to prevent the German victors on the Eastern Front from raiding Allied supplies piled up in the White Sea region. Furthermore, in the summer of 1918, no one expected the Germans would crack up so soon and all the strategists were planning campaigns for the following year, when, had the war run over as expected, an Allied operation on the German north flank might have justified itself. Archangel 'just grew' accordingly. Where criticism of the War Minister began to have force, concerned the carrying on of this ultimate sideshow as a purely anti-Bolshevik affair after the Allies had won in the West. This was a typical piece of Churchillian ebullience dared at a time when the allied populations were jointly throwing their caps over the moon and not giving a thought to such people as Bolsheviks or their conceivable menace one day. Stop the killing! call off all wars! was the urgent, light-headed mood and Mr Churchill's efforts to back up the Russian Whites earned for him in some quarters the reputation of being a bloodthirsty war lover. In the light of what happened later, these earliest efforts to oust the Bolsheviks before they could get a proper hold would scarcely suffer by a re-appraisal.

As for the doubtfully judged return to gold, that savoured of a piece of Churchill impatience to get back to the pride and glory of Imperial Sterling; though it was to be pre-



THE RT. HON. WINSTON CHURCHILL

sumed he did not go against Treasury experts and the Bank of England.

So much for mistakes. Churchill had made some. Who had not? The point was that they had been exaggerated in his case and kept as weapons with which to assail him each time he rose in public estimation. Obviously a lot of important people were frightened or envious of Churchill, prejudiced against him, besides those harbouring an honest distaste or disbelief.

3. The British people sighed for a break in Front Bench drabness. Birkenhead dead, Lloyd George receding, Churchill was the only one left with punch and colour—'glamour'. Hitler had to be answered by somebody as adventurous and vigorous as himself. Hitler! To compare that neurotic, teetotal, cream-guzzling, almost haunted creature, Wagner and 'The Merry Widow' his only relaxations, with an artist in life like Winston! With his irony and trenchancy, his terrible wit, Winston—thus to duchess and to coal-heaver—would be a match for all of them on the radio; he never had stopped short of saying what he wanted to. Besides, somehow he had come to belong to the nation's family. It seemed all so long ago . . . 'The Absent-Minded Beggar,' 'Goodbye, Dolly, I Must Leave You' . . . that he first stepped on the stage and he had been there ever since. Forty years! What hadn't he tucked away in that time in the shape of intimate contact with State affairs. Knew his way blindfold up and down the Ministries in Whitehall. The public did not forget that, either.

Thus did Mr Churchill become primarily identified with Britain's fight to retain her own liberties while simultaneously ensuring as far as possible the freedom of other nations.

'Primarily'?

Fortunately any question as to which is the more repre-

sentative, the Premier or his Secretary of Admiralty, is met by an additional consideration. These biographies are of men engaged in the military sphere of our defence, not the political. M. Daladier was included not as Premier but because he is exceptionally bound up with this French armed might, and for a resembling reason the only other civilian, Mr Churchill, joins him. One visualizes this First Lord fighting the enemy precisely as the uniformed Admiral Pound at his side. He is in the lists. So much so, that the Nazis regard him as the Clémenceau of this war.

There is also this: if you asked any friendly foreigner to name the foremost British champion of liberty in the present struggle it would not be long before the answer came 'Churchill' after maybe a preliminary mental skirmish over Mr Chamberlain. The Continent recognized before Britain did, that Mr Churchill had got the measure of the Nazis and was seeing correctly, with the result that each successive time the Member for Epping touched eloquence over the destruction of Austria, of Czechoslovakia, over the obviously preparing doom of Poland, foreigners became firmer in their view that here was the true alloy. I don't know how many times the thought was reiterated in my case in those years: 'Thank God Winston will get up and say something about it!' My job was a roving one through Europe, and perhaps from having been in early years in Germany, perhaps from an Intelligence Corps experience in the last war, perhaps just from knocking about the place and a spot of Celtic intuition, I felt what we were breezing up for, and wrote it as far as my firm would tolerate what they called 'politics', which was not far, although I never ceased pointing out that their 'politics' was nothing less than the drama of our current existence, prospect of continuation thereof. Anyway, while the others went on appeasing and hoping for better things, for a leopard-like Blitz-change, I would

buy the papers and be thankful for Winston whose contributions refreshed as a shower in Andalusia. He understood the psychology of men, and what they would obey. Of course hundreds of others were being right at the same time but these could be right in their clubs or cafés or at their own tables or over bars, whereas Mr Churchill had to be right before the whole nation in the House of Commons. Ready for all responsibility, he never had been one to disguise his thoughts. He had special sources, true. But did not Mr Baldwin have access more easily to better sources still and what use had he made of them? What use were all the Bills in Christendom over which Parliament spent its time, if the measures taken to keep out murderous burglars were insufficient? The murderous burglars were there, roaming about outside taking their bearings. Mr Churchill kept a steady eye on them but why he alone among statesmen of the front rank? 'Ll. G.' did not compete for perseverance, for deadly pointing force.

The Churchill who returned to the Admiralty in 1939 to fill the same post that had been his a generation earlier, at the outset of the Great War, differed from the politician last seen in office, as Chancellor, ten years before. Close friends say these years of stubborn opposition were among the most useful of his career, in the formative sense. In them, he grew to wisdom; appetite was transmuted into a patriotic fervour. He took stock of the impact of himself upon others and decided to reduce the force of this impact in the future, while sacrificing none of his buoyant self-confidence or incisiveness. He would riddle people less. He decided that swimming upstream for its own sake had been a temptation too often succumbed to, and not always of a yield warranting the effort. In a delicious understatement he once announced: 'I have a tendency against which I should perhaps be on my guard; it is to swim against the stream.' He did enough of this, in all conscience,

during 1929-39, and in the latter part may have come to the conclusion that he was damaging his own prospects, and thereby withdrawing a British strength potential, by indulging too much of it; too much (to change the metaphor) ploughing the lonely furrow—in his case the implement more resembled an electric drill—and too much scaring of people by the sheer weight of his own personality and brilliance. Personal idiosyncrasies required to be taken in hand. Calmed.

This was a wiser Churchill who returned to office. A man who had gained in stature. A man carrying more of the massive momentum of greatness, garnered by prolonged fighting of his own battles. Even without the terrible seriousness provoked by the war, this would have been a different Churchill we should have known in the 'forties. A check on the charging, impetuous manner, on the contemptuous drum-fire, the rending wit, the arrogance. No longer out to crush people with the nonchalance of an earlier day. As a back-bencher he won back popularity by his good humour and camaraderie. The facile way to put it, is to say that our subject has mellowed.

Yet there is something about the word mellowness ('being softened or made genial by experience') suggestive of the softening veteran at eventide, that fails to meet the First Lord's case. He always was genial with those who made him feel that way, and probably finds it as difficult as ever to be so with others who haven't a like propitiating effect. The Churchill mutation is a more consciously directed affair than 'mellowing.' It is as if, realizing the disquietude he is capable of provoking in lesser mortals, he has decided to be more selective in his verbal forays and at whom these are directed; that a term shall be put to a former too deliberate imposition of his brilliant and sometimes oppressive and even hurtful self, upon whom he chose. The picture of a Churchill desisting

from flaying, trying not to shine, hesitating to enforce the prodigious background of his knowledge, may amuse some and seem impossible to others, yet it is what has been noticed.

There have been several Churchills and the war of 1939 brought forth a new edition. Von Ranke wrote his *Lives of the Popes* between the ages of eighty and ninety, and doubtless if Mr Churchill lives to be a septuagenarian he will produce comparable mighty volumes on the present struggle, yet we are probably contemplating the final edition of him as statesman.

Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill is one of whom it can be said with good cause that England is unlikely to see his like again. The times and atmosphere that bred him are dissolving underneath our eyes. Grandson of the seventh Duke of Marlborough, his playgrounds were the ducal palace of Blenheim, where he was born, and the Vice-Regal Lodge in Dublin, which he had to leave because of some Gladstone-Disraeli change-over affecting his father's position. A six-year-old boy noted down the underlying reasons of that domestic move; as a four-year-old one, looking up from his army of leaden soldiers, had answered with an uncompromising 'Yes', Lord Randolph's question, 'Would you like to be a soldier?' An unshining, unpopular, caned schoolboy at Brighton and Harrow, detestable years, all wrong in method and objective (according to their victim), the young Churchill drew level on holiday, though he was always a little awed by his parents and did not taste overmuch of the brilliant social life created by a partnership of the most dazzling hostess of the day, late of New York, and the most talked-of and quoted politician of the 'eighties.

A good-looking, red-haired, slim and restless youth blossomed to manhood in the last full rays of the setting Victorian sun. There was opportunity in those years—the

second half of the 'nineties—such as never can recur for a would-be successor or imitator. Young Churchill stepped out as the conscious bearer of a great family name, as a member of 'one of the few hundred great families who governed England for so many generations and had seen her rise to the pinnacle of her glory' (*My Early Life*). Vanity was here, and self-assertiveness, but also what enviable hunger after life's experience, zest to get on with the being and the doing! To a Kiplingesque drop-scene of romance while war and adventure were yet synonymous, the Sandhurst cadet gave a dinner to pals 'who are yet under twenty-one years of age but who in twenty years' time will control the destinies of the British Empire'. Later that night the host made his first public address, after his hilarious party had removed a partition shutting off the bar of the Empire Promenade, which, thanks to Mrs Ormiston Chant, had been erected to prevent imbibers fraternizing with the promenading women. 'Ladies of the Empire!' was how Churchill apostrophized from the bar top.

Lord Randolph dying tragically early, it behoved his heir to reconsider ways and means. Not yet come of age, he went to act as war correspondent in Cuba, beginning of five famous years as soldier of fortune armed with a (journalistic) free lance. First sampling of Imperial sway taught him the 'irresponsible, wasteful, harsh, above all vindictive' nature of Cuban rule. The interlude provided other data of a personal kind. It acted as 'a secluded trial trip' for testing his courage; it showed him he could always earn his way by writing; and for the nonce it enabled him to go to India as a Hussar subaltern because his chief object in going there was to play for the All-India polo team and this would cost money. The objective was achieved, and much basic reading besides: Macaulay and Gibbon, moral philosophy, history and military strategy.

Brother officers were hardly in favour of the lisping descendant of John Churchill, whom they found too smart and cocky, 'American', not in the best of taste. 'Medal snatcher.' Too pushing and full of himself. And this writing business—*horrid!* At much effort, Lieutenant Churchill pushed himself out of India, and on to an unwilling Kitchener, when the Sirdar was getting ready for the Mahdi. It was further subject of criticism that this young man in a rush never hesitated to make use of family pull. That was what got him on Kitchener's staff, and into the historic charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman, on reforming after which, he was heard to ask his sergeant: 'Did you enjoy it?' The young man who asked that, lived to write of war that from being 'cruel and magnificent' it had grown to be 'cruel and squalid . . . with chemists in spectacles and chauffeurs pulling levers . . . to hell with it!'

In the Sudan, Churchill wrote dispatches for the *Telegraph*. He sent in his papers, and, back in England, quickly threw off *The River War* (excellent) and a novel called *Savrola* (frightful) and found time to offer himself to Oldham's electors, unsuccessfully. Then the Boer War came along and it was all Sir Garnet. Having gained attention with Napoleonic dispatches to the *Post*, an indefatigable war correspondent was captured while helping to defend an armoured train, and his escape after three weeks' detention, or the way this was described for the people at home, coupled with the dashing ex-captive's return with a troop of Light Horse to Pretoria, scene of his escape, made 'Winston' almost the personality of the campaign after Bobs himself. In valuing his recapture at £25, the Boers placarded this description: 'Red haired, snub nosed, about 5 feet 8 inches, forward stoop, talks through his nose and can't pronounce the letter S.' The same year, 1900, they used to play 'The Conquering

Hero ' at his Oldham meetings which culminated in his election to Parliament, while he won the hall-mark of recognition when the music-hall artists sang:

*You've heard of Winston Churchill,
This is all I need to say—
He's the latest and the greatest
Correspondent of the day.*

The first lap was over.

The most pressing matter next was finance. Members were not then paid and the newcomer made up his mind that financial independence, however tenuous, was a prerequisite to the rise he planned for himself. He had a highly congenial scheme for a standard biography of his father. He would make this serve his financial aim. And, lo, it was so. The author threw himself into the volumes with such effect that a sum of £8,000 was earned, and literary fame. What he wrote thereafter was certain of a wide sale.

Of the passion roused inside and outside the House when the Member for Oldham crossed the floor over Tariff Reform, suffice that even the languid Balfour joined in the anathemas. It was letting down the whole nobility and landed gentry of England! The 'renegade' pointed out that his former party had changed over tariffs, not he. To which came the contemptuous rejoinder that the deserter reckoned on a long Liberal run of power and was determined to be in on it. Whatever the, maybe mixed, motives for his change of allegiance, Mr Churchill was certainly a big winner. Under-Secretary for the Colonies in 1906, when not a man in office with him today had been heard of in politics, a thirty-two-year-old beginner in official life had the extraordinary fortune to pilot through the legislation leading to the creation of the Union of South Africa. A maiden

speech five years earlier had singularly fitted him for the honour. 'It must,' he then said, 'be made clear to these brave and unhappy men that, whenever they are ready to recognize that their small independence must be merged with the larger liberties of the Empire, there will be a full guarantee of all their property and religion, an assurance of equal rights . . . if nations under the British Crown could be healthy and happy the cause of the poor and the weak all over the world will have been sustained: everywhere small peoples will have more room to breathe; and everywhere great empires will be encouraged by our example to step forward into the sunshine of a more gentle and a more generous age.' Words spoken by a young man of twenty-seven, which could probably go unmodified by the elder statesman of sixty-five.

A Right Honourable and a member of the Cabinet shortly after Mr Asquith succeeded Campbell-Bannerman—that is to say, a good thirty years ago—Mr Churchill has since been in ten Cabinets and has served under five Prime Ministers. In those past days of terrific party strife, 'Winnie' kept in the centre of the picture with his weird hats and such episodes as his borrowing of the Guards to quell alien gunmen. The majority was amused by him, not hostile. But in public and political life it was different: nobody had more enemies. Fortunately, this state of affairs was balanced by lasting and valuable friendships, as with Mr Asquith and Mr Lloyd George, even if the former did first set official seal on a reading of Churchill that was to do him much damage—'Winston has genius but not judgement'. However, these and other leading figures were charmed by several Churchillian facets: his loyalty, irrepressible spirits, his brilliant and inexhaustible talk, by the essential kindness and humanity of the man. But, in order to get along with Winston Churchill, one had to be high-powered. Such a one as 'F. E.' Otherwise, one was in

constant danger of submersion. Far too unsettling a fellow, in the view of most politicians; the truth being that he was altogether too much for the average tribe, who could not cope with such 'cleverness'. Not a doubt but if ups and downs have studded this career, the basic handicap has all along been too much brain, too great a versatility. The England on the way may stand more for these attributes than did that of the past.

The immediate years leading to 1914 were probably as happy as any in a life of consistent happiness. Mr Churchill once corrected someone enumerating his triumphs. 'You've left out,' he said, 'the greatest triumph of all, my persuading my wife to let me be her husband.' Nor was this rhetoric, for he has been as happily wed as the great Marlborough himself. From ultimate Edwardian days into the 1940's this marriage has held its successful course, with high-spirited children contributing in varying degree. When the union was still very young, the husband's private bliss became reinforced by translation to the office of his heart, the Admiralty. At thirty-seven, 'Winston' had charge of the King's Navy, which also meant he could make wonderful semi-vacationing cruises in the 'Enchantress'.

As fate decided, he had three years in which to prepare for 'the Day'. It was a famous interlude. The First Lord had money to spend, and the Navy was never happier, particularly when its chief brought Jackie Fisher back. At the same time, two sailors by the names of Jellicoe and Beatty were so employed as to be best qualified to assume certain posts in war. Young Captain Beatty was brought in as Naval Secretary, in 1911, and sent out to command the brand-new Battle Cruiser Squadron two years later; a Rear-Admiral aged forty-one. A new Naval Staff was set up. The 'Queen Elizabeth' fast battleships were laid down, and fifteen-inch guns introduced. In fact, an absorbed

Minister toiled and planned until arrived that last week of July 1914 when, whether by part-coincidence or not, the Fleet *was* mobilized and in full commission and able secretly to gain its northern battle bases at a time when a great German fleet existed close at hand. Of subsequent events, notice has been taken. One other fact is worthy of record, as calculated to add comfort today. On the sidelines, the First Lord helped the Tanks into being when they had been turned down by Kitchener. In letters to me some years ago on another subject, Sir Ernest Swinton had occasion to mention how his urgings fell on fertile ground at the Admiralty.

The year 1916 found Lieut.-Colonel Churchill in the trenches commanding a Scottish battalion. He declined Haig's offer of a brigade until he had learnt enough about the new warfare, and by the time sufficient had been assimilated Mr Lloyd George was in office as Premier and calling for his friend's push and go to be reconsigned to Whitehall, from France. Followed the Ministries of Munitions, War, Air, and Colonies; yet Mr Churchill remained under a cloud throughout these years, 1917-22. He was able later to reproduce in his *World Crisis* many memoranda on all aspects of the war and after, penned in this period, and they vindicated in a remarkable manner his rightness of view at the time with respect to vital affairs; but the wide public was to know nothing of this in the early 'twenties, when 'Winston' continued to be generally recognized as a brilliant might-have-been.

Labelled as such, he reached the age of fifty. Ousted by Dundee, people scoffed at his hunt for a safe seat. He successfully wooed Epping, but political stock remained low. He had better stick henceforward to writing, nodded Tories of the sound and orthodox school. Such critics had to modify their tune when, out of the blue, their *bête noir* became Second Minister of the Crown, the Exchequer, in

Mr Baldwin's 1924 Administration that was to run the full five years.

Were these fruitful years? On the literary side, yes, several more volumes of the majestic *World Crisis* being completed. On the political: doubtful. The long spell at the Treasury, Mr Churchill sums up in his own way: 'A spell of sedate, well-organized and un-exciting Conservative rule. It seemed in these years that the world was making good revival from the War. The Income Tax fell to four shillings in the pound, and the number of unemployed fell below the million mark. The Treaty of Locarno seemed to offer the means of ending the deadly quarrel between Germany and France. A considerable wave of prosperity or recovery swept all countries, and a hectic boom developed in the United States. It looked as if the wars were really ended. Disarmament was the order of the day.'

In what he called 'this halcyon period', so soon to turn to worldwide economic blizzard, Mr Churchill had small admiration for those he surveyed from the Treasury Bench. Partly because 'the scythe of the Great War' left practically no one but an Eden as representative in the first class of a mutilated generation, 'the House declined in liveliness and debating power. The bulk of its members became functionaries to register the will, or lack of will, of the party leaders. A high level of docile, disciplined mediocrity was attained. We, in fact, repeated a century later the Liverpudlian Epoch, which followed the triumphant struggle against Napoleon.'

Protracted residence at 11 Downing Street may have tempted the Chancellor to contemplate occupancy of No. 10, if its 'Safety First' tenant could be moved on. It is no great strain to imagine how Mr Baldwin may have been affected by what he called 'Winston's one hundred horsepower brain'. Moreover, there had been the bosom friend,

Lord Birkenhead, talking about 'cabin boys on deck'. Whatever transpired in an obvious clashing of type and temperament there was no place for Mr Churchill in any Government during the whole decade 1929-39, during the bulk of which period when Europe was giving the clearest indication of impending earthquake, Mr Baldwin proceeded on his way.

As 1900 had marked a first lap, and 1911 arrival at the Admiralty, a second, so the nineteen-thirties turned out to be a third, more important than either that had gone before. In this, Mr Churchill emerged as the youngest elder statesman since Rosebery's brief noontide, and, even as the laird of Mentmore, came to be regarded as the foremost orator of the day. There the resemblance stopped abruptly. Far from a lackadaisical withdrawing from the scene, the Member for Epping spoke more often and more forcibly at Westminster than any other politician of his rank. When the word went round 'Churchill is up', it flocked to the House. To cheer? No, not always to cheer. Sometimes to listen in admiration of the manner rather than to agree with the substance. It might be a masterly speech on foreign policy or a maliciously jovial attack in witty and ironical phrases on some Conservative Minister: the House loved it all and the Press Gallery wrote that the finest oratorical traditions were being sustained in the Mother of Parliaments. In a House from which all rivals had vanished and where only a friend, Mr Lloyd George, remained in his class, Mr Churchill gradually forged himself into a formidable one-man Opposition, for if many agreed with him secretly, they feared to link their fortunes openly to his. The party game had to be played. So far as Mr Churchill was concerned, party seemed to matter less and less. Now he would take something from the Labour arsenal, now from the Liberal, now from his own side of the House. So long as he believed in that something, so long as it helped on his

grand central theme of keeping the Empire together, he didn't care if Attlee or Sinclair or Simon had sponsored it. This was well illustrated over the League of Nations and over Soviet Russia.

The Conservative Party was piping down on the League, trying to forget about it. Labour made Geneva its main 'plank'. Why should back-bencher Churchill choose that juncture for coming out as a full League man? The answer was simple: he believed that a successfully functioning League could be a source of prime security for the Empire. With Russia, matters were more extreme. How could the man who had said this: 'Was there ever a more awful spectacle in the whole history of the world than is unfolded by the agony of Russia . . . devoured by vermin, racked by pestilence, deprived of hope . . . not only a wounded Russia, but a poisoned Russia, an infected Russia, a plague-bearing Russia, a Russia of armed hordes . . . and political doctrines which destroyed the health and soul of nations,' and this, after Stalin's 1937 purge: 'For all its horrors, a glittering light plays over the scenes and actors of the French Revolution. . . . But the Russian Bolsheviks are not redeemed in interest even by the magnitude of their crimes'; how could the man responsible for such castigation expect sound and orthodox Tory members to take him seriously when later he advocated a treaty of alliance with these fiends in human form, of his own visualization? The answer to that was: Mr Churchill saw Enemy No. 1 in the Nazis, and as long as Russian political action did not have the effect of similarly menacing the Empire—and until then there had been no Finland, no Soviet encroachment on neighbours by force of arms, attitude causing millions of non-communists to wonder if something better than expected might not be hidden inside the Red giant—as long as there was a possibility of getting Russia to act as even a passive rampart in the East,

Mr Churchill was in favour of striving to hammer out some form of agreement with her.

But that sort of reasoning was too much for true-blue Conservatives, who passed into the Lobby agreeing 'Winston's crazy'.

Mr Churchill put a vast amount of effort into fighting the India Bill, a lost cause, he was aware, yet he felt that the fight had to be put up by somebody. His stand over the Abdication led to his being shouted down, unique latterday experience for the most attentively listened to of members. It is probable that here spoke a medley of loyalty, affection, and an innate generosity of outlook: that deeper considerations may have become momentarily blurred, or, more probably, were cast aside before the central consideration that ever since peace had returned to Europe and the world, this royal personage had been used and re-used by the nation as its first servitor of Empire, and that the official treatment being meted out was just a trifle too cavalier . . . Mr Lloyd George had called it 'caddish'. Not for the first or last time, the Member for Epping had to explain himself before his constituents who are today no doubt duly pleased with themselves that they never passed to extreme measures.

Empire! In latter years that word came to express the first article of Churchillian faith. It has been said that this statesman, traditionalist and yet ultra-modern, is in essence an eighteenth-century Whig, and that if the Whigs were not imperialist, Churchill is an imperialist of more spacious times; that he recalls the great Whigs in his designs to better the lot of the workers though maintaining the necessity for a ruling class, and as lover of liberty. With respect to the last, to associate British democracy with Nazi doctrine would mean the elimination of most of what the Empire stood for. 'That power which burns Christian ethics, which cheers its onward progress with barbarous paganism, which vaunts the spirit of aggression and conquest, which

derives strength and pleasure from perverted persecution and uses the threat of murderous force—that power cannot ever be a trusted friend of British democracy.’

Time never hung heavily on Mr Churchill’s hands. Few leading public men can have had greater inner resources than he, endowment that stood him in good stead during his years in the—not quite—wilderness. If a person may be part judged by what he makes of his leisure, then here is first and foremost an artist in life, one who has profited by the years to evolve a well-balanced whole. One who has worked hard and played hard, or, better said, has taken those things in life that seemed good to him. If he has kept in trim, it has not been through physical exercise or watching a diet step. Tennis, golf, shooting, hunting, if they ever had a hold, made progressive departure, but the pleasures of table and cellar have been enjoyed with the selectivity one associates with the artist—albeit with a divergence from Whig custom. To imagine Whig leaders forsaking their claret and port and clay pipes for champagne and large strong cigars, is to conjure very ill men. Mr Churchill’s key to well-being has lain in a terrific industry that has been no work to him, in relaxations of the creative kind, in conversational brilliance, in frolicsome outings, and in a singularly successful marriage.

Under the ‘outings’ might be included plays and films and many congenial dinner parties, yet that is hardly what I had in mind. I was thinking of a night, a year ago, at the Cannes Ambassadors, when a sexagenarian world figure took the floor in front of a packed cosmopolitan company and skipped and hopped and jumped with mock solemnity to ‘Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree’. ‘Still the irrepressible subaltern!’ drawled a dowager within hearing. Round-faced, pink and paunchy, the red hair no more, the same one that had charged at Omdurman in the dim and misty past was having a good time because he felt that

way inclined, and in the morning it would be down once more to his *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, at the celebrated Golfe Juan villa where he was always welcome, and after that back to England because that fellow Hitler was about due to break out again. . . .

The Riviera has served Mr Churchill well. The comfort and rapidity of getting there; the early morning writing in the sunshine; the painting in the hills behind or down by vivid rocks and sea; the gay luncheon sorties along the coast; an occasional short cruise, an occasional gamble; the meetings with friends, an 'Ll. G.', a Duke of Westminster; the sparkling late parties. Lucky, the elder statesman about whom there is nothing heavy, and who can attune himself to most conversational occasions save two. He is without small talk and he cannot endure the gushing ones who show off for his benefit: to such he will oppose a resolute silence. On the other hand, should there be no big gun present, capable of talking on something akin to his own level, Mr Churchill has it in him to indulge dazzling improvisations on quite trivial subjects, that give him as much pleasure as they do the company. There is really not much ground for fearing to get out of one's depth, because this courtly and kindly man, full of bonhomie, can be the best of listeners to a nobody if the latter has an interesting job or experience or viewpoint to present. His own mind full of ideas, he is ready to be interested in the ideas of others.

A man of expensive tastes, Mr Churchill has probably long agreed with Dr Johnson that nobody but a fool would write except for money. Yet one suspects some of the frothy stuff thrown off in 'popular' quarters has been done with an eye to the electorate. As master journalist, he could have gone down in the history of his time, were he not also, perhaps, among the first three writers of English prose. For some phases of his *Marlborough* he went to stay at

Blenheim. As for newspaper articles, seldom in the Ten Years did he allow a week to go by without some major contribution which would be syndicated in many European countries, in the Dominions, and the United States. Americans count Churchill first. Maybe they feel that something of themselves comes out in this half-American. At all events, the sympathy and the link are not to be under-estimated.

Besides writing twenty books and a thousand articles, and painting far more water colours (signed 'Charles Marin') than ever came to decorate the rooms of friends, Mr Churchill has built walls and cottages and rockeries at 'Chartwell', his Kent home. He had to join the Westerham branch of the bricklayers' union, and, judging by recent photographs showing him in action on a roof, no brickie could affect more informal attire. He seems to have on a very ex-British Warm, badly holed in the chest and bursting at the shoulders, trousers tattered down below, and what the French photographer calls a *feutre défraîchi* that could join the first row of any museum of Winston's Hats.

To be responsible for the Navy against foes like the Germans, capable of launching any piece of devilry between one dawn and the next if they can but think of it and possessing that measure of initiative which can belong to forces at bay, is a twenty-four hours' job. If it was so in 1914, when the First Lord lived at Admiralty House, the absence of a great German Fleet in 1940 did not reduce the vigil: on the contrary, such new factors as the ever-suspended major threat of the air arm, the perpetual harrying of the North Sea, the French Navy operating in a general way under Sir Dudley Pound, more than made up for no High Sea Fleet.

Mr Churchill begins his day before seven a.m. by reading the dispatches of the night and going through the news-

papers with the speed of the craftsman. A light breakfast, in which China tea and a cigar are the chief ingredients, and the First Lord passes to his ample red leather dispatch box, set on a large table-desk in a permanently overheated room. Correspondence is dictated to secretaries in rotation, but the signatory always makes his own corrections, as if he were proof correcting, and does not wish fair copies to be made. Interviews are liable to break in on events at any time. Visitors in great variety have appointments each day, from heads of departments to sub-lieutenants. Mr Churchill believes in personally seeing people 'with something', and these he may detain anything from five to twenty minutes. He seizes all ideas at once, and respects those who argue logically with him. He carries the personal equation to becoming acquainted with the names of minor functionaries and details of their work. Conferences are apt to be held at any moment, but there are two set ones daily, one towards noon, and a second round nine p.m. At the latter, Mr Churchill may be more dynamic than at the former, since he has enjoyed an hour's repose from seven to eight p.m., before dinner. This is the one piece of relaxing that he tries never to miss, as it enables him to carry on until two a.m. and even later, and still be fresh. He may complete his diary when his 'day' is over, and he lays a fountain pen by his bedside, for those nights when plans and ideas come during wakefulness. Sometimes he will spend the night in a special train tearing north to investigate why this is lagging or why that has not come up to the mark; checking output and construction; examining the possibility of new defence measures. No time is wasted on parades and eye-wash. On such trips, it is 'Mr Johnson' who moves about Tyneside or the Firth of Forth, though all penetrate the label. The return from one such lightning investigation led to a new catchword joining the language. Mr Churchill had been impressed by the possibility of augmenting

catches of fish in the North Sea, and initialled one of that day's many score memoranda with the two imperative words 'Utmost fish'. Whenever anything has to be done to the limit, they now say 'utmost fish', in Whitehall.

Visits to the House are usually made twice weekly, to answer questions, and to listen to the Prime Minister whose 'tough fibre' is admired. Possibly Mr Churchill feels protected by the wealth of caution in the Cabinet, from irresponsible charges should the conduct of the war not devolve without serious set-back.

On returning to the fateful room looking out on the Horse Guards, what did the First Lord find different compared with twenty-five years before? Physically, there was Sir Dudley Pound in the place of Lord Fisher, and Sir Charles Forbes with whom to maintain relations instead of Sir John Jellicoe (and an officer in the Mediterranean, Admiral Cunningham, having no counterpart, of importance, in the last war). There were sand-bags and the black-out, and an alternative command post in the country. There was broadcasting. Winston Churchill could now go to the microphone and tell a whole nation, continent, world, about 'that man over there'. He could josh 'General—I beg his pardon—Field-Marshal Goering'; in bold contempt he could refer to the 'frenzy of a cornered maniac' and to Ribbentrop as one of a pair of 'twin contortionists'. That was one aspect. More important, the First Lord could speak inspiringly and comfortingly to a nation, and across the seas, and win ever greater trust from the people by telling truthfully and openly of losses, as he could exhort with such apt watchwords as 'Carry on and dread nought.' His masterly surveys of the war at sea, how we fared with magnetic mines and U-boats, 'pocket-battleships' and corsairs, took the place of the writing of history, for this historian, as he fought the war; later he

would write a successor to the *World Crisis* on the strength of notes and diaries kept from day to day.

Broadcasting reshaped the First Lord's personal situation before his fellow-countrymen and before the enemy, compared with 1914. As regards the first, there was a new feeling now, one of: 'Everything that can be done, is being done. If Winston can't bring it off, the chances are no one else can.' For the second, Churchill became THE ENEMY to an extent that no single Briton ever was a generation earlier. Then, the Germans roared that they had one foe and one alone—England. It seemed likely that any successor to the Hymn of Hate would have to include the name Churchill.

Its bearer probably asks nothing better than that the personality of Britain's First Lord should so upset the enemy; as it is doubtful if even the Premiership would have been more acceptable to him at this time than the post he fills.

Americans should watch with special interest the direction of the naval war. If Mr Churchill's mother was formerly Miss Jennie Jerome, of New York, Sir Dudley Pound's was Miss Elizabeth Pickman Rogers, of Boston. Characteristic of this war has been a depreciation of publicity in respect of leaders of the forces. Of Jellicoe's successor, about all one has gleaned is that the C.-in-C. at Jutland wrote of his Flag Commander that 'Forbes has always afforded me great assistance'. Not much more—at this writing—has been prized open concerning Admiral Pound, though French newspapers salute this sailor in unique style as the *Admiralissime* of the Allied Navies.

The man who stands in Lord Fisher's shoes is married, with three children, is aged sixty-two, and began as a midshipman in 'Royal Sovereign' in 1891. As junior officer he specialized in torpedoes, and served on the China Station and in the flagships of the Mediterranean, Pacific and

Atlantic Fleets. At thirty-two, Commander Pound came ashore to the naval ordnance department; a couple of years later—1911—he was given his first ship, the cruiser ‘Superb’. And also, hereabouts, he won the Royal Humane Society’s bronze medal for rescuing ratings from a gassed hold. From instructor at Portsmouth, Captain Pound went to command the cruiser ‘St Vincent’ in Jellicoe’s Grand Fleet, but was brought back as assistant to the First Sea Lord, and under Fisher’s eye he continued to work until that drastic old sea-dog symbolically pulled down his blind. Some months more in Whitehall, and the young captain, only thirty-eight, was given command of the battleship ‘Colossus’, one of Jellicoe’s line of battle that tried in vain to reach Beatty on the night of Jutland, in time to finish off von Scheer. Captain Pound served the last twelve months of the war as Chief of Operations at the Admiralty.

The ’twenties witnessed a steady ascent that could only mean, one day, the top or somewhere very close. From command of ‘Repulse’, Captain Pound passed to be Director of Plans, and Chief of Staff to Sir Roger Keys in the Mediterranean, in which post he was promoted Rear-Admiral. Assistant-Chief of Naval Staff, 1927–9, he next commanded the Battle Cruiser Squadron, and then put in three years as Second Sea Lord, in which office he made appearance at Geneva in connection with the Disarmament Conference that forthwith provoked the greatest international arms race in history, thanks to the spirit of mutual trust, comprehension, and give and take, shown by all present, and by the forces behind them.

Sir Dudley Pound was Chief of Naval Personnel when thick clouds rolled up in the Eastern Mediterranean, consequent on Italy’s Ethiopian behaviour and resultant Sanctions. He was dispatched from London to act as temporary Chief of Staff to Admiral Fisher, and—promoted



ADMIRAL SIR DUDLEY POUND

Admiral meanwhile—succeeded to the command of the menaced Mediterranean Fleet, early in 1936. For the next three years, though the momentum of events became progressively less alarming, Admiral Pound had opportunity to show his temper and mettle. At Alexandria, at Cyprus, at Malta, at Gibraltar, and in the two thousand miles between, separating the statue of de Lesseps from the less visible Pillars of Hercules, the Mediterranean Fleet was kept hard at it, swallowing up as much oil in thirty-six months as normally in ten years. But principally it was a time of constant anxiety. With Europe slipping in some new manner every few months, with Italy brandishing her mosquito craft and ‘one-man submarines’ and fine air squadrons, with pirate submarines having to be tackled by the Nyon Patrol, and with the belief steadily growing that ‘the bust-up is going to come in the Mediterranean’, Sir Dudley had to maintain an unremitting watch and assure as far as possible that an initial strategical disadvantage would not be exploited against him. In the words of Mr Churchill, ‘Powerful British fleets were concentrated in the Mediterranean, and Mussolini, whose nerve has never yet failed, threatened them with attack if they or the Sanctions of Geneva should ever impede his military operations.’

Often in those years, when officers could leave their ships only at protracted intervals, must the C.-in-C. have gazed longingly towards the distant shores of Africa and Europe. Why? Because the Admiral is a first-class shot and precisely has been responsible for a catalogue showing the manifold kinds of game, feathered and hairy, that are to be found along the shores of the Mediterranean. The author’s only other effort has become for foreign navies a veritable manual of the offensive at sea: yes, this sailor is for pounding, at the slightest chance.

Only in 1939, with the end of the Spanish Civil War, was

it 'stand easy' once again, and some months later the Admiral who had shown his paces in conditions bordering as close on war as the modern Navy can well have experienced, returned to London to succeed the dying Sir Roger Backhouse, as First Sea Lord, and to be promoted Admiral of the Fleet.

CHAPTER TEN

CEILING

THERE WAS A TALE IN GENERAL SWINTON'S 'GREEN CURVE', in which dramatic victory fell to a commander who remembered that his opponent, a former schoolfellow, had red hair and was untruthful. Characteristics which led to the deduction that the adversary would follow a certain course in battle; which he did to his discomfiture, for he found himself forestalled.

Without going so far as to say we paid attention to the complexions of the German High Command in 1914-18, the keeping of personal files of leading enemy commanders was still encouraged. Thus I recollect that Von Hutier and Von der Marwitz were listed as 'offensive minded', and so each proved himself to be one grim March morning of 1918. The knowledge that the pair had been squeezed in opposite us, near St. Quentin, was among the pointers our G.H.Q. had to go upon regarding the imminence of Ludendorff's last great fling. Von Below was another offensive gentleman whose presence, as at Riga, at Caporetto, usually presaged major attack.

Memories that came to me over my morning paper, as I read how the B.B.C. had revived its Puzzle Corner in order to alleviate wintry black-out, and how one of its first questions: 'What is the name of the Chief of the Air Staff?' almost drew a blank. Few knew who was the Empire's Commander-in-Chief in the air.

It is a pleasant thought to imagine an enemy as much in the dark as the people of Britain. There could then be little chance of the German Air Intelligence drawing valuable deductions from the habits and characteristics of Air Chief Marshal Sir Cyril Newall. Provided, that is, one is prepared to accept that deductions of value can actually be made at this stage from the knowledge that Air Marshal X, who has the Parachute Command,

plays chess, and is vegetarian and therefore not easily roused.

But, in more sober vein, one of course has to realize that the enemy knows about Sir Cyril; has him as securely 'taped' as doubtless he had Sir Hugh Trenchard once upon a time ('hits hard and is not put off by losses; nickname "Boom"'). The Germans know that the Air Chief Marshal could be a tough proposition over reprisal bombing, for having himself led the way in that line in 1917-18. They know Sir Cyril was all for the balloon barrage, and against an independent Army Air Arm, the loss of the Fleet Air Arm having been sufficient. Such painstaking people as our enemies may even have made a note that the Air Chief Marshal is not exactly come-hither, and gardens as a hobby.

Of what military value such knowledge can be, is beside the point. Which is: the enemy Intelligence knows about Sir Cyril, and therefore, Royal Air Force bushel-hiding as a result of which the public knows practically nothing of a man who could quite conceivably emerge as the main personal force between it and perdition, did the air war suddenly develop the full weight and horror we know lies harnessed in reserve, this bushel-hiding requires to be considered from a second standpoint, that of the disadvantages it brings in a war such as this. The idea of the anonymous team in action may be justified for Air Force personnel, generally. One appreciates its virtues. It limits unfairness, checks jealousies and ill-balanced hero-worship, curbs prima donna airs. Whether it can usefully be applied to leaders of the R.A.F. is another question.

One of our errors has been to give too much publicity to enemy leaders and too little to our own. Admitted that most of the exciting drama has lain with the bad men and their dynamism; notwithstanding, the Allied war chiefs possess histories and personalities well suited to impress

foreigners and to stimulate our own people. In a war of mass psychology and high-powered propaganda, as well as of lethal weapons, it hardly helps the Allies that neutral countries have been able to get all they want, and more, about the Nazi war lords in each element, while having to dig hard for the Allied counterpart; when most of what they have managed to collect has hailed from France. The French appreciate better the value of the personal factor, and not only with a view to influencing non-belligerents. A stimulus has been given to the national effort by French people coming to visualize events at least to a certain extent in terms of their leaders. Gamelin, Darlan, Vuillemin, Georges, are names that mean something in themselves.

I write, therefore, of a man little known at this stage to his fellow-countrymen and women. And, yet, Sir Cyril Louis Norton Newall exercises a far wider control in a far bigger and grimmer air war, than ever the better-known Trenchard did, who commanded only in France. The fighters and photographers over the Siegfried Line, the observers over Berlin, the bombers over Heligoland, the crews attacking U-boats and chasing mine-sowers, the patrols far out in the Atlantic, the aerial defenders of London, all come under Sir Cyril. France, the whole of Britain, the seas surrounding her (note taken of the Fleet Air Arm's separate establishment). Nor is that the end of his responsibility. It extends to every sphere and latitude where British air activity prevails: the Middle East, the great overseas training commands, even an arrangement making for uniform control of the British and French Air Forces. In fact, the Air Chief Marshal's telegraphic address might appropriately be 'Ceiling'. He has reached it.

The power of an air force is not solely expressed by the arithmetic of wings. An air force is composed of many types of men, and its power is contingent on their brains,

their nerve and ingenuity, their training, their physique, the efficiency with which they turn out new machines, the astuteness with which they disguise and protect factories and aerodromes. It depends on the regularity of supply of refined oil and high-octane petrol; on the distance to hostile borders, and on the incidence of good or bad flying weather. Directing this mammoth power, is an officer who less than three decades ago was a submerged subaltern of infantry, and of whom it can with assurance be said that none among pioneer flyers ever fell more decisively for the aeroplane, than he. It was a case of complete subjection at first sight.

That was in 1911, in the days of Cody's 'flying cathedral', when the British were a good way behind the French and Americans (the rest nowhere). Newall was home on leave from India, where he was serving with the Gurkhas. Born in 1886 in an Indian hill-station where his father, the late Lieut-Col. William Potter Newall, I.A., was posted, he had first entered the Warwickshire Regiment, after being educated at Bedford and passing through Sandhurst. With the Warwicks, he was in the Zakka Khil Expedition. Beyond that, until he came home that stifling Coronation summer of 1911, there had been nothing out of the ordinary in a life of twenty-five years. Lieut. Newall had not then seen an aeroplane in flight, whereas people in England were growing used to the wonderful new arrival. They were even beginning to take first hazardous baptismal flights. The impact upon a man who had never seen a machine in the air at all, and who then saw one flying perfectly well, was necessarily greater than the impression made on others whose introduction had been gradual, commencing with machines hopping about more or less in control, a couple of years earlier. Newall gazed up at a 25-h.p. 'hen coop', marvelled, was lost in thrilling speculation. How this invention could simply transform warfare! Especially out

where he came from. . . . Good Lord, think of those punitive expeditions that took months and months, whereas with one of these biplanes . . .

The death-rate among learners was high in 1911, the 'smashing of wood' greater still. A small sprinkling of Regular officers had got into the air, largely at their own expense, and while remaining attached to their regiments. One of them, Captain Trenchard, shipped home from West Africa and determined to make flying his future career in the Army. But he had not yet become the motor of the Central Flying School when Newall appeared on the scene. The young enthusiast was obliged to spend his own money, which he gladly gave together with all his leave, learning to fly by the October following, when he would have to return to India. He was determined to take his wings along with him, and did so, with Royal Aero Club certificate 144. Only five who gained their certificates that year are still actively serving.

What followed in India is easy to imagine. The subaltern of Gurkhas became a pronounced flying bore in messes and clubs, on social occasions, and even when on duty. 'Flying had gone to his head like champagne,' relates a brother officer of those days. 'He thought and talked of nothing else. Yet, if his enthusiasm sometimes bordered on the delirious, he mingled with it a remarkable prescience. He used to buttonhole superior officers and wouldn't allow them to slip away until he had got his astounding ideas off his chest.' Astounding, they were, in those days, when the Indian Army still considered the cavalry as the only arm with which to round off war. You might say that if Waterloo was reputedly won on the playing-fields of Eton, India's campaigns were won on the polo ground.

Newall never tired of badgering: 'What do you think about a flying school?' 'What are we doing to prepare

ourselves for aerial warfare? ' For a long time his enthusiasm fell upon barren soil; eventually, in order to have a little peace rather than from any great belief in results, Army Headquarters authorized him to organize a pilots' school. But it was already 1914, and arrangements were still incomplete when the war in Europe supervened. And that meant just one thing. Dropping his Indian plan, Newall got seconded to the Royal Flying Corps and was back in England in the early autumn.

Ordered to join No. 1 Squadron, in France, he was given command of a flight. The couple of score machines then with the B.E.F. were being used almost exclusively for reconnaissance. Fighting, bombing, photographing, artillery ranging, were wrapped in the mists of the future, not to mention infantry liaison patrols, spy-dropping, and one or two other extras that the R.F.C., later the R.A.F., was to engender. By 1915 the Indian Army officer had become Squadron-Commander, and he remained in charge of No. 12 Squadron for the next two years. I remember him well, for having had to circulate in R.F.C. Brigades in order to push my wares, for which purpose I was armed with a *sauf-conduit* from General Trenchard, inviting brigadiers, wing and squadron commanders, to do everything to help. But the lecturing I had sometimes to do was not so good. I was never a lecturer, and recall one frightful occasion when I arrived half an hour late, to find the concentrated higher brass-hattery of the 2nd Army, from General Plumer down, waiting on an absent lieutenant. ' Why late? ' a colonel demanded, and upon my beginning ' I was held up by a woman . . . ' loud laughter intervened, and I was told not to mind but to get on with the job. And you can imagine what a hash I made of it. Yet the excuse was a perfectly valid and soldierly one, had I been allowed to continue. There was a famous girl who kept a swing bridge across the canal at Arcques, and when she

closed it, she closed it, sometimes for a whole half-hour; and that was what I had run into, on my way up to Cassel Hill.

However, this has precious little to do with the Air Chief Marshal, if it resuscitates for the writer something of the ambience in which Squadron-Commander Newall lived and moved. As a fact, there is almost a total absence in his case of such lore as came to be handed down in a Vuillemin's connection. The Newall war record forms a bald narrative by comparison. Save for his winning of the Albert Medal 1st Class, usually associated with peace-time heroism, very little can be retrieved at this late day. The act by which this medal uniquely adorns the breast of so high-ranking an officer was one of cool courage. One day in 1916 fire broke out in an R.F.C. bomb store containing two thousand high-explosive bombs. The key could not be found. Newall and a mechanic climbed on the roof and played a hose through a hole burned by the flames. After which, the Squadron-Commander led three others into the building, and together they put out the fire. A further peculiarity of this officer's war-time rewards concerned the absence of certain British decorations such as fell to practically all others of his responsibility and prolonged flying. True enough, he came out with three rows of ribbons, three mentions, and a Brevet Major, yet where was the D.S.O., the M.C., the D.F.C.? A 1919 C.M.G. and a C.B.E. and four earlier foreign decorations were well deserved, if only for the important trail blazed by Newall from 1917 to the end. The bombing of London had to be stopped, and with the idea of checking it by giving the Germans some of their own physic, we began formation of a great bombing command in Eastern France. Newall's No. 41 Bombing Squadron was the spearhead of this force. Based on Nancy, the future Air Chief Marshal was the first British flying officer to command in latitudes that were to know many

more R.A.F. uniforms a generation later. Nor should Western Germany, especially the Rhineland, have forgotten the punishment his squadron inflicted on industrial and military targets in retaliation for Zeppelin and aeroplane raids on London. As events turned out, the Zeppelin peril went up in smoke and flame one autumn night in 1917, when seven of eleven airships were lost on a single raid, but the aeroplane threat might have waxed far greater than it did during the final twelve months of hostilities but for salutary reprisal flying such as Newall's. Some months before the end, General Trenchard left R.A.F. headquarters to command the Independent Air Force in Lorraine, and had the war endured into 1919, it is tolerably certain that the British public would have heard the name Newall then, for the first time, instead of twenty years later.

Transferred to the R.A.F. after the war, Newall soon was promoted Air Commodore and there commenced a long run of staff appointments enabling him to gain direct personal knowledge of every form of Royal Air Force work. As early as 1926, when not yet forty, he was made Director of Operations and Intelligence and Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, joint posts which he held for the five subsequent years. The Air Council knew him first in 1930, as an additional member, and after a brief spell in command of the Wessex Bombing Area, Air Vice-Marshal Newall went out to command in the Middle East, from 1931 to 1934. He had had fifteen years of every aspect of higher staff work, none possessed greater professional knowledge and experience, when the hour struck in 1935 for serious reconsideration of Britain's aerial position. As Air Member for Supply and Organization on the Air Council, Sir Cyril was given the key position at that time: preparation of ways and means for building up of an Air Force second to none 'within striking distance of our shores', a force properly balanced to meet Britain's special



AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR CYRIL NEWALL

situation, and, above all, one that would grow to ripeness at the proper moment. The deadly error committed elsewhere of constructing an air force too precipitatedly, only for it to grow obsolete before completion, had to be avoided by every effort of prescient organization.

At the same time, Baldwinism had to be combated. After announcing Britain's new frontier to be the Rhine, 'Honest Baldwin' was hoping to ensure it by an addition of 600 first-line aircraft in the succeeding five years—up to 1939. If MacDonald was still Premier, Baldwin was the power. But why insist? During a dozen years of their alternating rule, Britain had slumped to sixth place in the air, after having sailed out of the last war in the clearest lead as the possessor of over 20,000 valid aeroplanes.

At this period (1935) Lord Trenchard felt occasion to remark that 'at the beginning of the next war the Chief of the Air Staff will probably be hanged by civilians outraged that the defence of London was not as efficacious as they had hoped'. That no hanging was done from a black-out lamp-post in September 1939, we must of course in part associate with the absence of the expected massive *Blitz* raids, but also to the great strengthening of our defensive that supervened during the four years of grace which were vouchsafed Sir Cyril—he was created Air Chief Marshal and Chief of the Air Staff two full years before war broke out. In the face of many scoffers, he put through the balloon barrage, later copied by the enemy. The main object of this beautiful accretion to London's sky was and is to cope with that worst of dangers to a great city, the dive bomber. But Sir Cyril nourished no illusions concerning the Germans. All out to win this war by any and every means holding chance of success, it was entirely possible that they would snatch the first opportunity we gave them, either by slackness or misjudgement, to deal a ghastly blow at the heart of the envied more than hated Empire. For that

reason the Air Chief Marshal insisted on maintenance of an effective black-out, however wide grew the criticism. The risk simply could not be taken, even for an hour, of exposing the London pattern to raiders who could sneak over like greased lightning. Far better for the public to comfort itself with the reflection that the black-out was only a four-months affair in the year, strictly speaking. If inventive brains begat lighting that did not trace a town's pattern, viewed from above, Sir Cyril was quite prepared to consider it. Otherwise, lights out. After all, there was a war on; a potentially terrible one.

The Air Chief Marshal is not what is called 'a colourful personality'. There are very few stories about him. If, as is said to be the case, Sir Cyril cannot stand the presence of reporters, that may be partly due to a legitimate fear that they will intrude sloppily on his strictly personal life which, like other soldiers, he no doubt chooses to consider as being on an entirely different and private plane, beside his service for the nation. On the other hand, a man born in an Indian hill-station, and no doubt beholden to Kipling, might remember what a persevering cub reporter the young Rudyard was, pushing his spectacles in everywhere they and he were not wanted. For aught Sir Cyril knew, a budding young Kipling may have itched to write about him, the other night, as he sat at dinner at Quaglino's; and there certainly seemed to be the structure of a story along imaginative lines in this supreme air chief of the Empire relaxing in well-lit (adequately lighted) surroundings in the heart of a capital verily of Cerberus and blackest midnight born, steeped in obscurity by his ordinance. Sir Cyril is a patron of war-time Quaglino's, so handy for the Air Ministry. An Air Ministry in Berkeley Square! And sergeants and other ranks skirting the table of the Air Chief Marshal; provided they can foot the bill, all's well. The thought of such levelling would have been dismissed as

fantastic nonsense in the India of Lieut. Newall, 2nd Gurkhas; and even much later.

One night the Air Chief Marshal broke his own black-out ordinances. From the steps of the Ministry he flashed a torch to aid Sir Kingsley Wood as the latter alighted from his car. 'Hey, there!' signalled the Air Minister, 'I'll teach you to show lights, whoever you are!' A local Cerberus approaching, even made to exercise his air warden's authority. But a high-pitched chuckle from a now enlightened Sir Kingsley nipped that in the bud, a happy chance since in the Service the Air Chief Marshal has a reputation for not being very approachable. Sir Cyril retains a measure of inherited 'Indian Army'; nor shall there be apology for this since what is meant is clear. He is reserved and withdrawn; practises an economy of language in the day's work; affects an acute distaste for publicity of all kinds. Yet, surely, less than ever now can the world be run on stratospheric Simla lines? There are reporters and reporters, and I could name half a dozen who knew more about what was going to happen in Europe, and wrote so, than a whole string of our latterday Cabinet Ministers put together. The revolt from publicity manifested by some Service heads, and of which the Air Chief Marshal represents an advanced example, may be in reality rather a revolt from the wrong kind of publicity. But whatever it is, publicity should be faced up to by a nation's leaders and where possible directed. However distasteful to some natures, the need is only too plain and it will grow in the years ahead.

The main thing is that all are agreed as regards Sir Cyril's professional knowledge and experience. Ruddy-faced, grey-haired, of medium height and build, he looks a jaunty fifty or under, and he has kept so principally by being always on the job, for recreations are conspicuous by their absence, save gardening at his Surrey home. And here, by the way, is another American tie, for in 1925 he married

Miss Olive Tennyson Foster, of Boston's formidable Back Bay colony. A well-known columnist was struck by Lady Newall's 'immense character,' and suspected her 'genuine belief in the fact that marriage either creates character in husbands and wives, or is a total loss'. Three children, a boy and two girls, ensure a happy domesticity.

Sir Kingsley Wood cannot be casually passed over. Obviously, the tiny and chubby, falsetto-voiced political chief of the Chief of the Air Staff must decorate this study. Sir Kingsley has had great good luck ever since Mr Lloyd George spotted him after the last war, for the likely first-class administrator he has since become. As Postmaster, as Minister of Health, his go-getting abilities and power to stimulate others were evident; but he benefited by an unlucky predecessor's work in regard to his second Cabinet post, as he did, again, when he arrived at the Air Ministry. Lord Swinton lost out because he was too given to sitting on people, abruptly; in lesser degree, because he was in the Lords. Yet he and Sir Cyril Newall had laid down the plans for expansion, had mapped out the pressure factories and their work, before May of 1938, date of Sir Kingsley's taking-over. What the latter achieved was the smooth, rapid and potent working of—everything.

There can be no mistaking the cherubic Air Minister's appeal. When he visited the R.A.F. in France, this was how a war correspondent wrote: 'The *petit homme*, as the French peasants learnt to call him, has been darting about from village to village, aerodrome to aerodrome, billet to billet, chatting here to a corporal, there with a wing-commander. Last night he sat in at a game of cards in an air mechanics' billet, under the light of two hurricane lamps. Wherever he went he had the same cheery greeting: "Now, then, how are you? Where are you from? How's your folks? Good man. Good luck to you." A pat on the back and off he'd go, his miniature gumboots

squelching in the mud, his black Whitehall hat looking strangely out of place in this war zone. He left behind him risen spirits, for it does a man good to meet his chief. We're sorry he's gone, because we all feel we've parted from a personal friend. He has made us all feel like that.'

Sir Kingsley has long given good personal value. He has had the word Success uninterruptedly bracketed with his career. A born administrator he is recognized to be. It is when we approach the political field, where few exhibit greater keenness, that doubts assail one. His acceleration of the idea that Mr Chamberlain should at once cash in on 'Munich' at a General Election savoured of a party trickery that can have no place in any England that is going to succeed tomorrow. If Sir Kingsley really thought it was 'peace with honour', then the less examination of his reading of the foreign situation, the better. It seems to me that a very important matter here becomes involved. Because a man proves himself a fine departmental administrator, rendering great service to the country in that line, why should that of itself make him a candidate for the Premiership; be made to give him hopes in the direction of a post wherein—in harmony with the Foreign Secretary—requires to be exhibited, in protection of the lives of a whole people, above all else a sureness of appreciation such as can spring only from certain qualifications attuned to a deep background of knowledge, much of it specialized? I have spoken earlier of the French 'School for Marshals' where public men, other than of the Services, are put to school late in life. It would be a good thing if some of our company 'aiming at the Premiership' were introduced to a similar institution, in England, where they could pass sufficiently high in foreign affairs to appreciate what an enormity going to the country on 'Munich' would have amounted to.

Digression, digression! Here I am, thrusting in a pet

theory simply on the strength of having interpolated a yarn about Sir Cyril Newall flicking a torch in Berkeley Square!

The Chief of the Air Staff is seldom heard publicly, and then usually at some Air Force function. On a rare occasion he developed the idea that 'our responsibility is the defence of a great Empire'. Britain did not want to attack: she wanted to defend. But if the issue were joined, she would have to attack or risk grave peril, because aerial warfare was not to be won by the defensive alone. That Sir Cyril and his associates fully realized this became apparent in the nature of the Force they set their hands to building. But could the offensive be better assured by more fighters or more bombers? Ding-dong the argument swayed, now this way, now that, as the lessons of other wars were assimilated, and as Goering's armada in preparation gave hint of probable tactics and plans. In no Service was a keen appreciation more imperative, on account of the constantly shifting ground. Indissolubly bound up with the type of machine to be built was the type of flier to be moulded. Lieut.-General Erhard Milch thought the best bet would be a rigid standardization. Newall and his marshals—Dowding, Bowhill, Persse, Sholto Douglas, Joubert de la Ferté, Longmore, Playfair, Brooke-Popham, and others—there seems to be some competition with Napoleon himself in the matter of this rank—were uniformly in favour of as rich an individualism as could be made compatible with certain basic requirements. Milch's aviators have been designated as being 'as much alike as piston rings'. And the General apparently has such a passion for pattern that 'when a Berlin squadron leaves its barracks and flies to Koenigsberg, its men are given identical pyjamas in identical rooms in identical barracks, and clean their teeth with duplicate brushes bearing their names.'

The first months of the war showed individualism to be the better solution. If Britain's young airmen were spoken

of as 'a new type of human being . . . casual and light-hearted on the surface but underneath a passionate interest in their work and a pride in the cool-headed efficiency that has to be maintained in a service where mistakes mean disaster', they were not turned out on the chain belt. They might be a new type, but they did have different model pyjamas. Parallel to the default of over-standardization of the human being, too many Messerschmidts spoilt the Nazi *Suppe*. It was perhaps the most heartening surprise of the early days to find that the 'Hurricane' and 'Spitfire' (and our Ally's 'Curtiss' and 'Morane') exercised a mastery over the much-vaunted German fighter, known to have been built in hundreds. Yet it behoved one to go carefully in crying success maybe too soon: this was one model of Messerschmidt, only. When the Air Chief Marshal visited the 'Air Component' with the B.E.F., he remarked that when a German machine came up against Britain's fighters, 'it invariably finished up looking like a colander'. Perhaps not quite 'invariably'. But, then, Sir Cyril is not used to speaking with people around. On this occasion, the first person he spotted at headquarters was the Chief Censor. 'What are you doing here?' he asked. 'I'm here to censure your visit, sir,' came in ready answer. Later that day, the Chief of Air caught sight of mascots painted on the fuselage of bombers. 'Chief Stoog.' 'Dopey.' 'Reminds me of the old days,' he remarked. The old days! Then, France was three-quarters of the whole aerial show: Home Defence and distant 'sideshows' claiming but scanty say in comparison. Now, such a fact as one section of Lord Gort's 'Air Component' forming the first line of defence against air raids on Paris, barely stood out in the general picture, so huge and spreading had this grown. There was even doubt if the R.A.F.'s multiple duties could any longer with efficiency extend to control of that 'Air Component'. Air fighting would so assuredly be dovetailed bang into

any and every battling of the land forces, should not the Army take over its own flying services? Against this, was argued the fundamental error of any dispersal of forces, and the crowning strategic need for the Allies to be able to concentrate their maximum air power at any time in any area.

The case was settled by the arrival in France of Air Marshal Barrat, to command in chief all air units there. 'When the Army wants anything, it only has to ring,' would henceforth cover the situation. Flying 'wing to wing' with Vuillemin's men, Barrat's detached force demonstrated that war flying in France closely resembled 1918, only with everything greatly speeded up.

Leaving France out of it, Sir Cyril Newall will have his work cut out controlling and co-ordinating the R.A.F. effort. The task of combining the strength, the strategy and the tactics of the Bomber, Fighter and Coastal Commands is one that will only grow heavier with every week and month. To visit the central control of the Fighter Command is to be quite sure of this. Vast maps of Britain, upon which defence stations are plotted, cover tables filling almost the whole floor space. Around the tables sit R.A.F. telephone operators wearing headphones. As reports of approaching raiders reach the control room from shipping, coast observers and other sources, they are charted. Fighting machines from airfields in the path of the raiders are ordered to take off and engage the enemy, and while in the air the pilots are kept informed by radio from the central control of the direction, speed and number of raiders.

A reconstruction of this control room figured in the propaganda film 'The Lion has Wings', but minus one or two closely guarded secrets. Sir Cyril himself requested certain cuts, when the film was submitted to him by the Censorship.

Head of the Fighter Command, and therefore the man on

whom responsibility rests for intercepting and driving back all aerial attack on the United Kingdom, is Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, otherwise 'Stuffy'. Under this former Gunner, aged fifty-seven, come not only the fighter material but also the anti-aircraft guns, sound-locators, searchlights, barrage balloons, and the Observer Corps. His accounting for the occasional invaders of the first winter was most stimulating.

The Coastal Command did not exist in the last war, but swung into first prominence in its successor. Its flying-boats are products of the perfecting of aircraft and navigation between the two wars. Their crews act as 'watch-dogs' for the Fleet, and keep the Empire's trade routes open. Contrary to what was freely heard before the war, the Air Force has actually extended the Navy's command of the sea, the coastal patrols throwing defensive screens over merchant shipping in the narrow seas and the ocean approaches, destroying enemy aircraft and giving effectual reinforcement to the campaign against submarines. Coastal flying-boats leave in early morning with enough petrol for 2,000 miles and often patrol the seas for twelve hours at a stretch. Bowhill's Coastal Command proved a live refutation of the facile saying during the opening months: 'The war hasn't started yet'. The war had also started for the Bomber Command, responsible for the leaflet raids, the attacks on German warships, and for the infinitely hazardous 'security patrols' above enemy mine-sowing bases. The R.A.F. was perfectly well aware that if the air war took an unexpected turn early on, that suited Hitler's book. Certain gaps had to be closed in Germany's aerial striking power before she struck, as she probably would do when greater daylight returned, and in conjunction with maritime, land and parachute happenings.

Meanwhile, our losses were criticized as being unjustifiably heavy at about 100 dead a month. In order to establish

and maintain aerial ascendancy, one has to be resigned to suffering much heavier losses than the enemy. It was so in 1917 when Britain and France decided to shoot ahead, and history is only repeating itself in different circumstances. I recall that on one April day in 1917 fifty-five of our machines failed to return. We may have to get used to losing a hundred and more in a day in this war. Provided we have a sufficiently large number of first-line aircraft, and provided the reserves and the flow of new machines and new personnel are adequate, the policy of gaining and maintaining aerial ascendancy is the only correct one, cost what it must. That this flow of fresh air power is ensured becomes apparent when we turn to the great Canadian training grounds, schools for fighting airmen from all parts of the Empire, including Britain herself. The creation of a vast Imperial Air Force may be the gift of this war to us. It may one day hold the Empire unified, as nothing else could.

In the more urgent present, the aerial armada preparing in Canada may well prove to be the decisive factor in beating Hitlerism. One only regrets that it was not begun two years earlier, when its looming wings might have acted as the one persuasive force keeping Hitler to treaty-revision by negotiation. There was no reason why the historic Canada scheme should not have been thus launched in 1937, no reason except a lagging foresight and purpose. If it be argued that a 1937 start would have been a provocation to the dictators, surely the answer is: since when has Britain placed foreign reactions before national self-protection?

However, the wings are coming.

Australia alone speaks of 50,000 trained personnel by 1942. If the war lasts, and if they all come under Newall 'from the ends of the earth', who knows but one day this officer may be the most important leader of all?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

IRONSIDE OF IRONSIDE

THERE IS REALLY NOT MUCH GROUND FOR COMPARING General Sir Edmund Ironside with the late Lord Kitchener. Yet the tendency to do so hovers. A study of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff written for an American magazine was promptly headlined 'Britain's New Kitchener' though I specifically pointed out the dissimilarities between the two soldiers as these entered the War Office at the outbreak of successive Great Wars: the one already old and physically losing, wrapped in himself, the other in mental and bodily vigour and accessible; Kitchener dictating in demigod style, unaware that the stride of events had overtaken the basic African in him, Ironside filling a circumscribed appointment, thoroughly at home in Europe; nor had the stirring personal history of the first been equalled by the second, fine career as he, too, had had.

That Britain's first soldier is big and inspiring, a resplendent khaki figure on the War Office steps, his name getting to be a household word, that his is a commanding personality and that he exhibits much organizing ability and strategical depth, these are resemblances with the illustrious departed, yet scarcely sufficient to warrant what has been attempted in the way of 'spotting a new Kitchener' for this war. There is small likelihood of such an apparition if only because the essential circumstance that moulded the superman of 1914 is lacking. There was no call in September 1939 for the one-man inspirational force so needed in August 1914 for the conjuring of a citizen army. General Ironside went to work under the sign of a conscription law six months old: expansion could be prosecuted on a sound basis with orderly progress and methodical training. Without disrespect, one would go further and suggest that the great dead embodied certain shortcomings and

traits, partly the fruit of severe colonial service, that we have no wish to see revived. It is here, indeed, that the scales tip in favour of the present C.I.G.S.—for if ‘K’ was War Minister, he was very much his own C.I.G.S. as well, embracing a good deal of the ground Ironside does. Sir Edmund shows a compensating freshness, and possessed a more immediately valuable military background with which to confront this second European conflict, than Lord Kitchener in his last phase was able to cull from the Sudan, South Africa and India, for confrontation of its predecessor. General Ironside’s all-round experience of the last war, and his active application ever since, are advantages that the great ‘K’ did not enjoy.

One has only to turn to the machinery governing the conduct of this war in order to realize that all comparison between the two soldiers is futile and unnecessary. Lord Kitchener as ‘organizer of victory’ was allowed to invade every defence realm, even the Fisher-Churchill preserve (Dardanelles). He bossed the Imperial Defence Committee as he bossed munitions. Pervadingly uncommunicative in Cabinet, there was little to be done about it. One could say that Lord Kitchener’s brave but octopus grasp has become loosened in the hands of Lord Chatfield, Mr Oliver Stanley, General Sir Edmund Ironside, Mr Leslie Burgin and General Gamelin, directing the B.E.F.’s role. Such faint forerunners as existed to a Kingsley Wood and a Newall, came under Kitchener, too.

Speaking colloquially, the office of C.I.G.S. got into a jam during 1914–18. There was no clearly defined arrangement as to where the soldiers’ say, in the prosecution of the war, terminated, and where the Cabinet took over. This led to great and tragic trouble. Matters are now ordered differently, the Government’s mission being to take responsibility for the political and general conduct of the war, while the General Staff’s role is that of looking to its military

execution, and to advise on what can and cannot be done, with full and unreserved explanation. In the result, General Ironside's duties are clear-cut. For him, to preside over the technical preparation and administration of the military strength agreed by the Cabinet in consultation with the War Office, and to tender advice on the strategy and organization to be followed with respect to all theatres that may arise. Such advice must remain of capital importance as long as the C.I.G.S. retains the Government's confidence. Mr Lloyd George has told us how the unimaginative obstinacy of Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson impeded matters in the last war—'impeded' is mild. That soldier was one of four, during the conflict, to occupy General Ironside's present chair. The fourth attempt, Sir Henry Wilson, lasted into victory, a brilliant mind but of mischievous bent, as his diaries revealed.

Should Sir Edmund not last into victory, it will not be on account of unimaginative obstinacy or mischief-making. He has seen too much of both, and of their effect, during forty years of widely varied soldiering. We can rest assured of a pronounced diminution of bungling and of obstruction by 'the soldiers' this time, the head of the Army having taken entirely to heart the lessons of the last campaign in France, and of its 'sideshow' reverberations. For General Ironside, there is no use touching anything unless it is going to be done properly, with a will on the part of *all* concerned. He wants everything watertight beforehand. No nasty surprises. 'I mean the avoidance of such campaigns as those of the Dardanelles, Salonica, Mesopotamia and the earlier Palestine. Campaigns smothered at their inception by a lack of concerted plan, impaired by quarrels as to command and a refusal to subordinate troops to a foreign commander. By landings and offensives carried out too late to have the desired effect. By forces unsupplied with efficient commanders, men and

equipment, because all had their eyes upon the front in France. Such campaigns started without proper calculation and each ended in a deadlock as complete as that in France. Hastily started and doomed to defeat. Gallant improvisations.'

It had just been decided that Britain was to have another large expeditionary force earmarked for France, and the General worried exceedingly lest we should be sucked into a repetition of the past ('marching down a narrow avenue of death towards a fortified and concentrated enemy in his own chosen positions') which would, ghastliness apart, be in his eyes strategically wrong. 'Is it not correct strategy to exert an immediate pressure from outside so as to force the enemy to desist from his attacks against our home centres? Armchair strategists prate of the value of interior lines, but one doesn't feel so happy within the arm of a vice. The timing of escape is not easy. Then let France and ourselves make up our minds to use our geographical positions to the best advantage! Let us put our heads together at once and have our plans ready. Let us have no misunderstandings and doubts which lead to such loss of morale. Let us be clear as to the combined strategy we are to follow. We are lucky in not having a multiplicity of weak Allies. We have the infinite resources of our Empires behind us. But, we both develop our resources slowly, and we have not the advantage of being able to choose the time at which to commence. We have got the chance of choosing the place.'

Of the several qualifications this soldier has for his post—qualifications that would have soothed a Lloyd George in 1916-17—breadth of strategical conception may rank at the top, since to advise correctly in this realm is surely the main business? Sir Edmund looks upon the enemy from all angles, political and economic as well as military, and is ever prepared to acknowledge changing circumstance in regard

to views or hopes formerly held. Essentially an attacker though in unexpected and carefully prepared quarters, that was how he hoped Germany might be tackled, but conditions alter and he is just as ready to support the long-drawn-out pressure of the economic stranglehold, adding an opinion that 'Germany will probably die of indigestion from an over-consumption of foreign bodies'.

This is a soldier who has the greatest respect for the war of brains. Himself of high and well-trained intellect, open minded, Sir Edmund would struggle to the end with 'the brain arm' before sending men to their deaths, and if only British soldiers appreciated more fully what that means, as some do, who were on the inside last time! In his eagerness for stratagem and ruse, Ironside recalls Allenby in Palestine. Allenby is a hero of his. That last campaign! The idea of this C.I.G.S. blocking such a notion as that of sapping the enemy by propaganda, as Robertson and Haig once blocked it, is wholly inconceivable: rather can one see the big man sitting down, lighting that pipe for the umpteenth time, and drawing up some ideas of his own.

The majority will be found to rate the General's organizing ability under stress of circumstances, as his chief asset. A faculty for getting things done, and for inducing men to give of their best. 'Determination and fertility in devising expedients to meet difficult situations' ran a personal report. 'Would make a good war-time C.I.G.S. but not so good a peace-time one' was a much more recent successor. The two reports were in a way complementary. This soldier is for ever hankering after activity of some kind, and, at that, for cleaving straight to the core of matters. The more difficult, the greater his worth. In the abnormality of war-time, this is splendid; in peace-time it can be calculated to tip up apple carts, private and Service. Or so some people reckon.

Then there is the power to express himself in the clearest

language both orally and in writing: no misconceptions possible. General Ironside can say what he wants to say. He speaks fluently and earnestly, with a grasp of realities. In French, it is the same. A meeting with General Gamelin resolves itself into a talk, not an indirect, interpreted, interrupted affair. To think in another's language must always be an advantage where events of magnitude are at stake. Exception made of Kitchener and Wilson, our leading soldiers last time were unable to muster any really serviceable French, the while Foch and his kind were fuming to cascade.

Frankness and sincerity, one to whom the thought of intrigue does not occur, are further desirable traits in a C.I.G.S. They form part of the Ironside character, if some fancy the first is at times apt to breathe an impetuous outspokenness, an impatience in regard to men constructed on different lines to himself. It may be, as often happens in the case of a frank man without *arrière-pensée*, that General Ironside has been inclined to trust others—not to talk or make mischief—rather more than might always operate to his own interest.

Is this mettlesome vehemence a regular part of the bill that has to be paid for having really big men in our midst? From consideration of Kitchener, a Birkenhead and Churchill, of the late Lord Fisher, in some degree of Mr Lloyd George, one might be led to think so. The General certainly exhibits a boldness towards responsibility such as one associates with dominant minds. 'I cannot agree with the people who keep on complaining of the dangers and troubles with which we are faced. I thank God I was born to go through these tremendous events' was the declaration of a man with confidence in himself, forged by great experience and the knowledge that he has studied as deeply as any other British soldier of his day.

Finally, Sir Edmund Ironside looks the part: huge and



GENERAL SIR EDMUND IRONSIDE

handsome, an upright and active fifty-nine, brick-tanned, fine blue eyes, greying, and with amusing, almost invisible *circumflex* moustache; while his name as good as rings out the battle-cry 'St George for England!' although it is a pity greater mention could not be made of North Britain.

There is piquant interest in General Ironside's presence at the War Office because of the belief prevalent at one time that he had been swept away by the Belisha broom.

At forty-four, Mr Hore-Belisha was the youngest War Minister in a long while, when Mr Chamberlain appointed him in May 1937. Known for his capacity to stir things, he was put at the War Office with that end in view. A long-neglected Army required to be released from the grip of military autocrats who, fine soldiers as they had proved themselves to be, were none the less too jealous of past army structure, not elastic enough of outlook, to attend at the realization of fundamental changes held to be imperative. The Secretary for War had seen distinct possibilities in Lord Gort, and shock number one came with the elevation at the end of 1937 of this relatively junior officer to be head of the Service.

Lord Gort had attended the Staff College during General Ironside's period as Commandant, when it is possible that the playboy side of the famous V.C. did not wholly commend itself to the strict disciplinarian in charge. Moreover, Sir Edmund had some justification for believing himself to be in direct line of succession to the post of C.I.G.S. He was then across the way, at the Horse Guards, as G.O.C. of the important Eastern Command; and so he remained until midsummer, 1938, when his appointment to the Governorship of Gibraltar was announced.

The Sandys case fell just afterwards. In this scrape, the War Minister's personal situation may not have been rendered easier by the promptness with which Sir Edmund

set up a Military Court to adjudicate in regard to the leakage of information. But Sir Edmund's nomination to Gibraltar, long regarded as 'the dignified ending to an outstanding military career', had been made previous to the Sandys affair. Nor did it fail, when made, to provoke protests from leading military critics who saw in Ironside one of Europe's best strategists, and, for that reason, a man who should be kept in England, the way international affairs were heading.

Did Mr Hore-Belisha harbour the intention of shelving a soldier of exceptional merit and one still in the vigour of his powers? It does the late War Secretary greater credit to suppose that he acted on a plan of some depth, and that Sir Edmund was primarily sent to Gibraltar to meet the exigencies of the military situation. At the moment in question, command there was no ordinary affair. Not only had the defences of the Rock been allowed to lapse; all eyes were then on the Mediterranean, and particularly the western extremity of it, with Franco and his Italians and Germans so much of an unknown quantity. Somebody strong and capable and if possible with a 'name' was temporarily needed at 'Gib'. At the same time, it may not have been wholly displeasing to the Secretary for War that this formidable, prestige-laden officer should be a thousand miles away while Army reorganization gained momentum, the General having betrayed lack of sympathy with some features, such as the execution of Woolwich and Sandhurst.

In the outcome Sir Edmund was left at Gibraltar seven memorable months, and at any time could have been directed to resume a command given him suddenly at the height of 'Munich', that of Commander-in-Chief, Middle East. The War Minister had this experienced commander ready to proceed to Cairo from day to day, did menace draw closer in those parts.

Ten weeks before the outbreak of war, the General was brought back to England to be Inspector-General of Overseas Forces, when it was expertly accepted that this meant he would command the British Force in France. But Mr Hore-Belisha had not finished with his surprises. With war a fact, he translated Gort to the command in France and put Ironside in Gort's place at the War Office. This may have been all along the Minister's plan in depth, although Mr Hore-Belisha was possibly responsive to advice on the undesirability of keeping Ironside too long absent from London.

It is a good test in civilians to be able to get along with soldiers, and I was one to be surprised that Mr Hore-Belisha did not draw more upon the sound Major he once had been, when it fell to him to have to deal with 'the Generals'. Not that these outed him: he did that himself and will do so again, failing to realize his dizzy ambitions, unless he learns. Where much circumspection should have been his, he rode away on his own brilliance; tried to be the little autocrat (and let others follow on); could be borne, by his desire to shine in company, towards topics marked for a War Minister 'reticence is golden'; garnered credit globally; overwooded Fleet Street; pushed an army levelling that had better have been left, some of it, to other times, and which bequeathed the faint suspicion that it was being done as much to gain suffrages in the country, as to benefit the latter.

There is nothing adventitious about General Ironside's rise and attainments. Son of the late Surgeon-Major William Ironside, of Ironside, Aberdeenshire, the young William Edmund chiefly shone at school as athlete and passed speedily through Woolwich to go out to South Africa, in 1899. By 1902 he had mastered Cape Dutch, which enabled him to participate in the Hottentot 'rebellion' of two years later as the observant driver of an ox-

wagon. At this time the Horse Artillery subaltern must have been a magnificent specimen, twenty-four, noted Rugby football player, yet he has related that he suffered Prussian officers to spit in his direction without losing his self-restraint. The then German commander, Von Deimling, ten years afterwards had the 15th Corps at Ypres, opposite our 6th Division, of which Major Ironside was G.S.O.2, and the circumstance provoked a remembered remark.

We were seated before a log fire at Vlamertinghe, having just returned from a tour of the line, bulldog complete. 'The more I see of this war,' observed my senior, 'the more I am convinced we are up against it through lack of imagination. Take my own case. I know Germany and the Germans. I know old Von Deimling opposite. I spent some of my earliest youth in this very Flemish country, and know the ground and the lingo. In fact, I am clearly indicated for an Intelligence appointment. And they are threatening to send me home to shunt engines or something.' And, sure enough, the speaker could have made a splendid job of 'Intelligence', and very high up, too.

From the first Ironside took soldiering seriously, as the vehicle for a career. In the gay Edwardian times, while young brother officers were huntin' and fishin' and flirtin', he was piling up languages partly by becoming attached to foreign regiments during protracted spells of leave (was that *all*, perchance, that he was doing?). One has read that he knows anything from a dozen to a score of foreign languages. He holds an interpretership in Cape Dutch, Hollander, French, German, Danish, and Norwegian, and can get along in other directions. The possessor of a fine memory, his method was to build up an extensive vocabulary by daily application. This he was able to do in pre-1914 days while acting as Staff Captain in South Africa

and as Brigade-Major at home. Having passed the Staff College, Captain Ironside was qualified to hold an immediate appointment in August 1914. He was ordered to Boulogne as landing officer of the original 'Tipperary'-singing contingent, being one of the first officers of the B.E.F. to disembark.

At the end of August, when the Channel ports became directly menaced, he was sent round to St Nazaire, to act as Base Commandant while the 6th Division was landed and rushed up to what was to be the Aisne. Lord Northcliffe had an idea about this Division. It was that I should attach myself and car to it and forget about the rest of the war. 'Give the single story from first to last of one British division.' The Base Commandant, to whom I had to make my presence known, had other ideas. 'Disappear in a general north-easterly direction, and look slippery.' 'But, sir, you've told them to remove all my petrol tins.' 'Give the fellow enough to get him a hundred miles!' A year later, I was to report to Major Ironside, D.S.O., at Vlamerhinghe. He remembered me, but did not apologize; however, we found a subject of common interest in Russia, alias the Steamroller, where I had been for many months.

This was the period when a massive Major 'Tiny' Ironside used to ruffle certain seniors by explosiveness of criticism and unorthodoxy, and by a tendency to the theatrical as evidenced in his frequent rounds of the front line accompanied by a bulldog with wound stripe, and by a kilted orderly, himself leaning on a wooden staff of arresting dimensions. But it was also the period when exasperating, unfit dug-outs were given commands as high as Division and some of the explosiveness indubitably emanated from having to maintain a respectful attitude in their presence for long spells at a time. The Major was one of a band of young staff officers well posted at brigade, division, corps, army headquarters, who did not cease to

notice the mistakes made and the chances missed, or the ways and means by which the fighting machine might be improved, casualties lessened. They may not have been able to do much about things, but that only embedded matters. Pupils at the only true staff college, war, the more gifted learnt and profited all the time.

As for the bulldog, this soldier has never long been separated from the breed, while the general personal *mise-en-scène* was really at bottom nothing else than the spirit of juvenescence ('the schoolboy') in Ironside, that may not absolutely have left him to this day, factor which his friends claim as an asset: no mental ruts, or crabbed and prejudiced habit of mind, if plenty of strongly formulated, even dogmatic opinions, likes and dislikes. Essentially, however, a soldier keen for novelty, nothing hide-bound in him, and without 'side'.

By 1916 Ironside was General Staff Officer, 1st Grade, and Brevet Lieut.-Colonel; his phenomenal rise had set in. But the Canadians requiring someone grand and tough to train them at Shorncliffe, he was selected, and was to spend many months at home. This period covered much of our most tragic plodding—the Somme, Arras, Passchendaele—and, as a measure of G.H.Q.'s misdirection of the campaign could be traced to a facile optimism on the part of the Intelligence branch and a sycophantic eagerness to pander to the Commander-in-Chief's plans instead of standing up to Sir Douglas with—to be on the safe side—an over-estimate of the effectives and difficulties likely to be encountered, it was a pity that the departing Ironside never stood in the running for head of Intelligence in the B.E.F. That was the kind of thing that was wrong with our general staff, and one hopes it has been corrected. Staff officers without special training or aptitude for Intelligence work would be appointed much on a basis of chance: they seemed to stand much the same chance of going to any other Branch.

Whereas certain Regulars are built for Field Intelligence, and Ironside was one such. For two sanguinary years, Loos to Passchendaele, an officer with no pronounced qualifications presided over our reading of the enemy, in France; reading on the strength of which battle strategy and tactics were formulated.

Intelligence's loss was the Canadians' gain. Ironside was given a brigade in time for Vimy, and until March 1918, when his 99th Brigade suffered very severely in the German onrush, the young Brigadier assimilated battle experience that stands him retrospectively in good stead. With the ultimate August there commenced four meteoric years, thanks to Mr Churchill who, as War Minister, set the ball rolling.

First came command at chaotic Archangel, whose supplies the Germans were coveting, and where the G.O.C. came to have six or seven different nationalities under him. It was now that he first came in the public eye vastly befurred in his sledge. Our men stuck it best, he said, because they spent every spare moment playing football or on skis. 'But the troops became demoralized by finding Bolsheviks opposite them instead of Germans.' The substantive rank of Major-General, at thirty-nine, was the reward for making the best of this campaign. Since 1914 he had risen from Captain, record advancement of the whole War.

The next appointment was in charge of the East Hungarian Mission when the frontier with Rumania had to be redrawn with totally inadequate mapping facilities. In 1920 followed command of the Ismid Force shortly after our Intelligence had begun to take notice of 'the Kemalist bands'. Once I met the General, over for the day at Pera. He was about to pack up, he said. 'I'm becoming quite well known as a successful retreatter. They're thinking of sending me now to take on Mesopotamia.'

Instead, it was command of the North Persian Force, an operation during which General Ironside had his closest call outside the trenches. In an air crash he broke a thigh. The machine fell in a flooded area, and for many hours its occupants floundered with leeches sucking their strength away. The General was placed on half-pay, but in seven months he was surprisingly restored and, as if in reward, there came promotion, to Commandant, Staff College, that held a thrill. At forty-two, this officer had the chance to leave 'a decided imprint on British military thought', which gains fuller significance if we reflect that his pupils included most of the active 'colonels and upward' of today's army.

At Camberley, the difficulty of a mount arose in acute form, for the Commandant, now at his heftiest, over sixteen stone, was an enthusiast for the Drag. Finally, Kruger was found; and when rider and beast hove ponderously in sight, irreverent cries of 'Here comes the Tank!' would be heard.

Two years in command of the 2nd Division, at Aldershot, led to soldiering in India, Meerut Division, which the General left in 1931 to hold the Lieutenancy of the Tower (the 'Officer in the Tower' case befell during Sir Edmund's tenure, even as the Sandys case later found him responsible senior officer at the Horse Guards: General Ironside was made to loom in the public eye). The Tower sinecure was an aggravating pause due to the play of promotion. It was known that the C.-in-C. in India wanted the General back at Simla, and in 1935 he returned thither as Q.M.G., being in the same year promoted general, at fifty-five, the youngest recorded in the modern army up to that time (Lord Gort was to gain the rank in lightning stride, at fifty-one).

On the way home to take over the Eastern Command, Sir Edmund travelled via Japan and Canada, in pursuance

of his policy of meeting foreigners face to face, and to shake the hands of old friends. The Canadians accorded their former hard-fighting comrade a triumphant progress.

It was typical of his unresting mind that while at the Eastern Command, the G.O.C. found time to give a lecture series at London University. The engaging title 'Forty Years of Army Change and Development' prompted me to profit by a recent meeting to enquire if there were any means of getting at the notes. 'Good heavens, no,' was the reply. 'I spoke without notes.' 'Throughout?' 'Throughout.' An incursion into the literary field, when in charge of the Staff College, drew attention not only at home. The Ironside *Tannenberg* has been accepted as a standard work. In this was told how seven and a half German corps smashed twelve and a half Russian corps and eight and a half cavalry divisions, and how the Russian losses of 310,000 and 650 guns equalled the total German strength.

While waiting to go to Gibraltar, Sir Edmund was caught up by 'Munich' and dispatched at a few hours' notice as C.-in-C., Middle East. Flying to Cairo when things had reached their very worst, there was an uncomfortable pause on Rome aerodrome, the General having a real anxiety lest he might be interned.

For some time prior to the Gibraltar appointment being announced, the War Minister had been harried in the Commons concerning twelve-inch batteries that Franco was rumoured to have brought up locally, and General Ironside's dispatch was partly decided with a view to restoring confidence in the public mind. As for the twelve-inchers, even if such pieces were in the vicinity, they did not constitute the chief danger, which should always come from howitzers sunk out of sight in the folds of the hills encircling Gibraltar. 'As a matter of fact,' one learnt, 'it's all damn-nonsense this chat about twelve-inch stuff in fixed positions. They can bring them up at twenty-four

hours' notice whenever they like, and that's of course what they'll do if they ever mean trouble.'

A lasting memory will be that of standing on top of the Rock with the General in April 1939. Crisis was in the air after the Prague seizure. The Welsh Guards had not yet been earmarked for 'Gib'; the Spaniards were showing their paces scarcely a mile away. We had reached another 'anything might happen' stage. There were 1,705 of all arms to defend the Rock, and everyone was booked for a specific task. No reinforcements were available with which to repulse instantly a rush landing down there by Rosia, or behind, by the North Front beach. Any number of machine-guns hidden round the harbour and docks were the mainstay of the forward defence system, in the centre of which, down on the waterside, the Governor had installed his battle command post connected to all parts of the Rock.

His Excellency was putting everything underground, oil, cables, stores, that had lain exposed to air attack; he was arming and fortifying with all he could get from home, and from the Navy; gargantuanly laying by water and food, and giving the civilians hope by devising huge shelters within the Rock. On inspection, the General would wave a cheery 'hello' to this and that Rock native, even to small children who no doubt wondered at the great man's transformation act; one morning in flannel trousers, sports coat and vintage soft hat, the next in stunning full-dress array, and such rows of ribbons!

'Home' was treating the Governor well, especially in sending out the latest A.A. guns. When all had arrived, attacking planes 'could be brought down like partridges'.

Sir Edmund does not believe in people with important jobs wasting their time on the social conventions, engaging in pointless conversation that only furthers a colony's jealousies and snobbishness, and his term at Gibraltar made this abundantly clear. He set a new note at the official

residence, one primarily of *work*, and was well prepared to pass the leisure intervals in his family circle that included a gracious Governor's Lady, an attractive daughter, Elspeth Mariot, fourteen-year-old Edmund, when on holiday from Tonbridge, his father's school, and Captain Hare, A.D.C., who must be a good inch taller than the General's six feet four.

In a swift seven months a lasting chapter was written in the history of the Rock. At the end, the send-off was such as no former Governor had ever received—the streets lined with waving, cheering Gibraltarians, an address at the Town Hall, 'Auld Lang Syne' rolling full-throatedly, the guns saluting. Typical Ironside milestone; sequel to a job of work well done and with the common touch.

In retrospect, that pulling together of the defences of Gibraltar, with its very necessary redressing of British prestige at this prime maritime cross-roads, was even a stouter effort than appeared at the time, for if the casual visitor declined to credit that this was in fact the dignified ending to a brilliant military career, the Governor was loathe to agree. He suspected that he had been labelled among the 'too-olds' and, coming just then, it went deep. Here was admittedly the best-posted British soldier on continental armies and foreign military thought and leadership, one who had made of Europe's modern wars a life study (and had fought through the Boer and World wars). Still in intellectual vigour and self-confident as ever, he was feeling as an expert shelved at the moment his knowledge could be of most use. 'For', he emphasized one day, 'war is certain!'

'Watch October,' the stem of a never-absent pipe was directed at me. 'Tell you a yarn. October, '37, I was in Berlin on a staff mission. One night I was taking a night-cap in the Adlon lounge when in came several of their army chiefs, Keitel and so forth. They spotted me and came

over, sat down, and we went on yarning and *prosit-ing* much too long. They just poured peace protestations into me. "To peace with England!" Toast after toast. Only—once or twice I caught a whispered aside, "*für zwei Jahren!*" Peace with England for two years. I heard them. Well, those two years are up in October.'

That the General was a Gunner with a reputation for getting things done in exceptional circumstances—the most prominent Gunner in the Army since Lord Roberts—did not find acceptance as explanation of his appointment to the fortress. This dominant personality felt side-tracked; the mind was more restless than usual. Only when he came to stand on the very top of the Rock, did the mood change. Then Ironside filled out, filled his lungs, surveyed his little kingdom, spoke as its guardian. And we swept the Spanish hills with our glasses. A week later, the London special correspondents came swooping down; and if one was later to hear the suggestion dropped in informed circles that rather too much of a song and dance—of a scare—had been made of Franco's local concentration, and that Anglo-Hispano relations did not benefit by that sort of thing, one stood corrected. Considering the degree of accuracy and success with which Whitehall had been reading totalitarians, this pose of assurance with respect to what the victory-flushed totalitarians of Spain might or might not have done did not lack audacity.

We may be sure that when General Ironside twice visited General Noguès, in Morocco, he elaborated his hope that French and British might collaborate decisively in the Mediterranean and North Africa did certain events come to pass. Sir Edmund shares with Sir Dudley Pound pronounced strategical views bearing on this region, as he divides with the Admiral the conception that you must protect yourself by striking, that defence must resume itself into aggressive action, that it is thoroughly bad to resign

oneself to remaining purely on the defensive, waiting to ward off blows.

It is giving little away to say that Britain's first soldier anticipated something different to work upon than 240 miles of Western Front. Expansive in mind as in body, there was almost to the end ground for his visualizing a wide circumference of front, based on a real 'Peace Front' had such been attainable, round which a favoured strategy might have been one of arranging for the defence of national bases, the United Kingdom and France, and then of attacking the enemy by surprise at his weakest points as unfolding operations dictated.

In his *Defence of Britain*, Captain Liddell Hart rather suggests that the aggressor must alone take the offensive, while admitting that others might have to espouse a strategy leading to tactical offensives. General Ironside probably agrees with a good deal of Liddell Hart, but he might be more downright concerning the necessity for the offensive by 'aggrieved' ones. Strategy aside, *victory* is what men fight for. Standing fast can be temporary wisdom, but never should the search cease for somewhere to attack advantageously.

General Ironside's ideal is 'a quick-thinking light infantry', and he would no doubt find himself at one with Captain Hart that 'only well-trained infantry, confident in their weapons and themselves, can live on a modern battlefield.' Whether the follow-up Hartism 'Theirs is a higher role than the supporting arms, calling for more skill and initiative,' would find blind acceptance with one whose regimental boast happens to be 'Where the Cavalry go, the Horse-Gunners go, too!' is not so sure. The General thinks that 'the educated mind adapts itself best to the strain of mechanization'. He comes down heavily for the educated soldier, while his interest in junior officers is great. We must always have an Army, he says, as long as we have an

Empire, and it makes him boil to think of the way the Army has been allowed to slide after past wars.

Long before taking over his present post, the General foresaw that training would be more difficult than in 1914 owing to the degree in which our Regular Army was neglected for so long. Moreover: 'Few statesmen realize that the Army we produced in 1914-18 was not up to the proper standard. The expansion demanded of our peace strength was too great for all concerned. Although the equipment, in the end, became sufficient, the training remained insufficient, and much of the opprobrium hurled so copiously upon our poor Commanders was unmerited. The Army we produced could not have been expected to answer the helm properly, and was unhandy and clumsy.' Sir Edmund is out to alter that. He does not believe in sending half-efficients overseas. Army expansion shall be steady but sure, if not at express speed, policy firmly approved by General Gamelin.

By September 1939 General Ironside had grown to be more familiar to continental publics than any British soldier of peace-time since Lord Kitchener. It helped that the former's name could be rendered idiomatically ('*le Général Flanc d'Acier*'). And this officer had travelled so widely as he followed the political and military barometers of nations and of men. Almost all European manœuvres had witnessed his large frame at one time or another since the last war, or previous to it. Today the Continent follows what the General does, where he goes, whom he sees. On the screen—leaving a Supreme War Council meeting—his soldierly figure is picked out for reference; long appreciations appear in the foreign Press of one who so obviously has 'personality'. One of his first missions upon his interim appointment as Inspector-General of Overseas Forces took the General precariously by air to Poland over which the sword of doom already hung so plainly. What

Sir Edmund reported at his return is a Cabinet secret, but that his fleeting presence stimulated the unfortunate Poles as much as people could very well be gladdened under a thoroughly bad Government, was evident in the pictorial record of the visit. The visitor at once became on good terms with his hosts by his appreciation of Poland and the Poles. He was able to say he had had contact with that country over twenty years, and cheerily shouted '*Jek sie macie chlopcy?*' ('How are you fellows?') to the company mustered on his arrival. There will be critics to call this eye-wash; such are merely insensitive to what helps in the world of today.

The same kind of critics characterize as an exaggeration the General's habit of sleeping in the War Office, in a camp bed drawn across the foot of his desk ('My husband literally lives in the War Office'—Lady Ironside). To those aware of Sir Edmund's capacity for sustained hard work, his gluttony for this, and of his determination to be ever personally at the controls, such Whitehall Nights are not surprising. I used to sleep myself in the War House at one time, and very handy it was, and cheap. That was only minding a map on the wall, a hush-hush map. But consider this keenest of soldiers reached zenith, responsible to the Cabinet for the preparation of Britain's armies, their dispatch overseas, greatly for their soldiering worth there, as for the best way to take advantage of Dominion offers of man-power, and for presenting the military angle on the higher war strategy. Not to wish to be separated for long from such a responsibility, is understandable, particularly if it be noted that no former Chief of the Imperial General Staff in time of war had to contend with such obstacles as the black-out, or with the possibility of such instantaneously grave emergency—as, any night, the immediate necessity for coping with the effect of terrific air raids, maybe accompanied by sabotage by parachutists, on the vast

Army organization at home. Nor can a stunt invasion be ruled out, while a sudden continental call is entirely possible. At all events, General Ironside prefers to be right on the spot, the only place he feels really at his ease.

His is a celebrated room on the first floor, looking down on Whitehall. In closest vicinity, all is activity or application on the part of a brassarded staff ranging from major-generals down, scene causing one to reflect that the General knows how to judge men, and is not one to allow personal loyalties and friendships to intrude on the composition of his staff. Efficiency first.

The General is seated at his desk, puffing away at his eternal pipe as he pens his war diary in an outsize copybook—very necessary records and reminders, these war diaries, one use for them being in respect of people who come forward with tales calling for a check, either during the conflict or long afterwards.

We discuss this and that, including difficulties with the Press. 'This business of landing an army in France is highly elastic,' says the C.I.G.S. 'I can't have journalists popping up everywhere to report crossings. I've got to get these fellows safely over.' Shortly after, this had been done, and the King sent for Ironside as the first of a company of soldier experts deserving well of their country. On his return from Gibraltar, the General's orders had been precisely to prepare the landings, details of which were supervised from an office in Thames House.

In private life, Sir Edmund is the happy family man and Norfolk squire. He used to spend as many week-ends as he could manage at his Hingham cottage, converted from an inn a hundred and fifty years old—preserved in the General's study is the hole where the beer came through—but Norfolk is too far to go in war-time, while the family is otherwise engaged. Pretty Miss Ironside, called Jane,

is a corporal in the FANIES (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry) and meantime drives Sir Walter Kirke, head of the Home Forces, hundreds of miles a week. Fifteen-year-old Edmund is at Tonbridge, headed for the Army. Tall and greying Lady Ironside, daughter of an Indian Civil Servant, is alone faithful to Hingham these days, inasmuch as she is billeting officer to eighty evacuated mothers and children. That comes lightly on my keyboard, but many might prefer the Maginot Line. 'The imagination boggles' at the task of keeping happy such a mass of strange humanity used to the excitements and amusements of a large town. For Hingham is a tiny village without even a shop, and only a couple of buses a day into Norwich.

Fortunately, Lady Ironside has the brindle bull-terriers, and dogs have meant a great deal to this family. I have mentioned the animal that became famous in the trenches long ago. That was Cæsar. There was still a Cæsar at Gibraltar, but, alas, just before the return to England, tragedy intervened. When the family was out for a walk over the Rock, Cæsar saw a goat and chased it. The goat headed straight over a craggy edge, and Cæsar, not realizing that the goat knew the district very much better than he did, followed. Only Cæsar's widow and his daughter Marina came back to England.

It is quite possible that by this the General has a bull-terrier secreted away on the first floor of the War Office. But not even a Sir Edmund could hope to get away with a Cæsar at the Supreme War Council.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SEA-POWER CHATFIELD

THE DIRECTION THAT THE WAR OF 1939 TOOK FOR THE British Empire can justly be linked in permanence with the name of Alfred Ernle Montacute Chatfield, Baron, Admiral of the Fleet, Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, and Beatty's one-time right-hand man in the North Sea. It is he, in reality, who comes nearest to sustaining a Kitchener role, although the spare figure and quiet diplomatic ways of the sailor are far from recalling the domineering soldier. Nevertheless, Lord Chatfield represents the only other instance in our modern history of an officer of one of the Defence Services being summoned to join the Cabinet, in which he sits among politicians as co-ordinator, central pooling authority and in some measure animator of those twin forces that shape a war: Arming and Strategy. That a sailor should sustain this role in relation to the Empire's defences has been regarded as of happy augury: a return to the glorious past.

The noble and gallant Lord is at the hub of the machinery on the British side, deviously turning and revolving before conducting to the Supreme War Council. He fulfils a function such as never existed before in any of our wars yet was bound to come in this huge and complex, overlapping display of might. If his title is an awkward one, it was chosen with circumspection, and as a fact it sounded more cumbersome when it adorned the original Co-ordination Minister, the worthy lawyer and Church expert, then Sir Thomas Inskip. An appointment such as his reinforced dictatorial views that we weren't serious, or were growing soft; nor was it wise or fair on the world in general, so to cause ourselves as a nation to appear before others: it merely spurred on dictators to act with greater *sans-gêne* and to dream more warlike dreams of expansion.

Lord Chatfield's position requires careful disentangling.

It would be unhelpful to label a man commandingly this and that, when the very essence of his job is tact and negotiation, persuading men to practise give and take, winning their respect by virtue of personal character and ability and soundness of argument. This sailor is not a 'czar' in the American sense, over anybody or anything. But he is the permanent British voice of the Defence Services on the Supreme Allied War Council, and he is Chairman of a Cabinet committee on war strategy, composed of the three Service Ministers and their Chiefs of Staff. The seven keep the course of the war under constant review and recommend modifications in its conduct.

The duties of administering the three fighting Services and advising the Cabinet on technical and military questions remain in the hands of the military chiefs. The Cabinet remains responsible for the broad lines of military policy and the military chiefs for carrying the policy into effect—in other words, for strategy. But in Britain's case those frequently fractious twins, policy and strategy, have to roam a large part of the inhabited globe, so the Co-ordinating Minister, as a member of the Cabinet formulating policy, keeps in constant contact with the military chiefs responsible for strategy, it being his duty to see that policy and strategy do their roaming hand in hand. This part of his task Lord Chatfield is best able to encompass in presiding over frequent meetings of the War Strategy Committee at which Sir Dudley Pound, Sir Edmund Ironside and Sir Cyril Newall outline their situations, plans and requirements. The Chairman's role is then really the dual one of guide and arbiter. But he brings his own views firmly to bear as he discusses strategy with these officers, and as, in harmony with the Minister of Supply, he links up Britain's heavy industrial resources and the separate needs of the three fighting Services. For a considerable period prior to the creation of Mr. Burgin's post, Lord Chatfield was to all

intents and purposes Rearmament Minister, and to this day he remains the culminating link between the Cabinet which lays down the broad policy of rearming and the industrial and other forces of the Empire that give it effect.

A multiple role such as this would be enough to give Lord Chatfield a place of honour among the nation's war leaders. 'Pulling the works together so that we get a maximum rendering to back each sailor, soldier and airman,' as one has heard it characterized. Yet it represents but one side of what he has done or is doing, and it may well be that historians will write at least equally of him as the man who reinstated the vogue of maritime power, who caused it to be accepted that ultimate victory for Britain depended as much as ever it did, come air or come totalitarian warfare, on exercising control over three-quarters of the surface of the globe—the sea. Sea-power and Sea-siege—these terms will long be interpreted afresh in relation to what this sailor thought out in the years 1933–39 and placed cogently before leaders of the State. Let Britain play her sea-power card to the limit! Let her exercise ever-increasing pressure on the enemy or enemies by economic warfare—blockade—but let this be applied with brain and a will from the first day. No gradual application extending over years, as in the Great War. While convoying her own cargoes, let Britain capture as many as possible of the enemy's, and when unable to do that, let her sweep the enemy's flag from the seas. Sea-siege would be neither spectacular nor exciting but its weight would tell in the end, while it could be a relatively humane weapon used against people so long starved of butter for guns. Progressively deprived of sea-borne raw materials vital to the maintenance of an armed might, the enemy would eventually cave in. Germany's last-minute turnabout in order to draw upon Russia was to modify such calculation

yet its foundation remains true. The wearing down should take longer, perhaps much longer than hoped, considering the vast neutral margin open to Germany. In the last war she could maintain contact only with Switzerland, Holland and Scandinavia. Her neutral margin now extends to the whole of Europe east of France together with much of Asia.

The French rediscovered the strength of sea-power in time to be of first-rate assistance. And Hitler showed himself to be alive to events by ordering all German captains to scuttle their vessels rather than let these fall into Allied hands: in that way he was doing the one thing he could to keep down the Allies' success, since if a ship sunk was a loss to Germany, a ship captured was a double gain to her enemies.

Turning back the page to 1933, it will become apparent that Lord Chatfield was the earliest artisan at work on the defences and the national strategy which we were able to bring into play six years later. In that nadir year for all three Services—taking into account how other nations were pushing ahead—he went to work at the Admiralty as First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff. It was in the dark 'Invergordon' aftermath and he found the Navy far below the safety-point in strength. Ever since 1919 it had undergone a steady decline, owing to the drastic surgery of disarmament and partly to financial starvation. Now, in 1933, the crippling 1930 Treaty of London still had three more years to run, and Europe was already giving signs of major trouble to come. Admiral Chatfield was confronted by two separate tasks. One was to prepare a long-term construction programme that would give back a new and modern Navy to Britain. The other, and more difficult, was to draft an interim naval policy for the next London Conference of 1935. This second task impinged, of course, on the first. But the First Sea Lord made a good job of it thanks to a notable display of

patience and diplomacy in Conference committee: naval diplomacy out of the limelight found him an adept.

The vaster programme of fleet building meant an increase in the annual estimates from £50,000,000 to £127,000,000 before he left the Admiralty. Lord Chatfield realized from the first that there was going to be 'a hell of a fight' and that unheard-of rearmament was certain to come, and he laid careful plans for the Navy so that there should be a minimum of confusion and delay when matters moved to a climax. Thanks to this foresight, when war came the Navy was receiving the best material to be had anywhere and plenty of good-class recruits to man the new ships. The Admiral drafted and carried into effect the whole gigantic programme that is timed to restore to Britain a well-balanced modern Navy by 1941, greatest project of its kind ever executed in peace-time. As was only humanly to be expected, one or two flaws were revealed under the hard and brilliant arc-light of war, yet the sweeping ease of some criticism betrayed scant appreciation of the complexities of a task that had to fructify over a matter of seven or eight years in a rapidly changing world.

Coincident with this fleet-building, the Admiral developed his theories of sea-war strategy for the conflict ahead. The importance of island groups, the steaming range of fleets, gun power, Britain's hold on the narrows through which all tropical requisites must pass. A strong force of cruisers and smaller warships, backed by the battle fleet, could control all trade at the two narrows, nine miles across at Gibraltar and less than twenty at Dover, and at the 200-mile gap separating Scotland from Norway. As for the jugular vein of Empire, the Suez, intercepting there would be a light matter. Plans to meet the U-boat war and raiders in the far seas were put on paper, and the whole aspect of air-power in relation to the sea examined. Air-

power would be a terrific newcomer, but it would not oust sea-power from first place. At the time of 'Munich' air-power seemed to rule the universe in most men's minds. After that eventful milestone of modern history, it began to recede from so overwhelming a position. 'The three Services are each part of a team on which the Empire depends but the battle fleet is the backbone of defence,' is how Admiral Chatfield sees it. None the less, vicious striking by the air arm may have to be called in to top off the effects of sea-siege, and bring a *dénouement*. High-standard-of-living democracies cannot afford to drag out great defensive wars or they risk playing the enemy's game, which is partly aimed at reducing them to poverty: a bankrupt Britain is better for Berlin.

Lord Chatfield has none of the externals some of the great admirals have possessed—the imperious quarterdeck manner, the flashing eye, the breezy or overpowering personality. Here is a quiet and unobtrusive sailor who could easily circulate in company without one noticing him above his fellows. Spare of figure, he is little taller than was Jellicoe, whose habitual quiet and reserve he, further, brings back to mind. He suggests a man always in training, with his brisk step, keen eye and fresh colouring. At sixty-six, he does not yet look sixty. The unwrinkled weather-beaten face speaks the word 'health'. 'There is something about him that suggests a sharp axe,' observed a colleague at the Nyon Conference, and the remark sheds light on the manner in which the Admiral later went about his great war-time work. Not many of us that day by Lake Geneva realized that this one great diplomatic success of the democracies in a dark period was primarily due to the complete plan with which the First Lord had journeyed to Switzerland.

At Nyon, there was nothing in this mild-looking and quietly dressed civilian, in the traditional soft hat, to suggest

that a third of the alphabet trailed behind his name in the Navy List. But his conversation, taken with his countenance and manner, at once suggested 'Navy': quick and clear replies given to the accompaniment of a swift and searching glance. His high office he referred to as 'my job', as one understands he refers to the House of Lords as 'my political house'. When he has to go there, no ringing phrases are heard, rather does the Admiral say what he has to say and then return to his war-machine headquarters. He can put in fifteen hours a day, and often passes the night on an iron cot in his office. Yet this sailor is no dodger of his fellows, as was shown when he blossomed into a first-rate after-dinner speaker. As an exponent before the microphone he comes second only to Mr Churchill, while having to compete, perhaps, with Mr Chamberlain and Mr Hore-Belisha.

Those close to him say Lord Chatfield is a man of much kindness and humanity. He certainly was popular in the Navy. This was testified when he bade farewell to the combined Atlantic and Mediterranean Fleets at Gibraltar near the end of his term as First Sea Lord, during which he had done so much for the Royal Navy. As he was taken in the Admiral's barge from the flagship 'Nelson' to the homeward-bound P. & O., the entire combined fleets cheered the most popular man in the Service that day. Not a popularity gained by spectacular means or traits, but derived from a confidence slowly built up. The Navy liked the strength of character and serenity of temperament, the steadiness of eye and calmness of voice, that recalled Jellicoe, ever held in affectionate esteem. It liked the Chatfield sense of justice, and respected the Chatfield abilities. His driving power, a mind capable of shrewd and quick decisions, a resolution from which nothing could swerve its possessor once he was convinced of the correct course. The Navy liked the idea of this un-showy sailor packing so

much personality and forcefulness into unarresting stature and appearance: administrative ability, the diplomacy of the statesman, a prime seaman's worth.

There is this that is curious in the Admiral's composition. Physically he recalls Jellicoe, and in his quiet and reserve. He exercised kindred healing influence upon strained relationships in the Senior Service, and he never was a controversialist, a 'big ship man' or any other kind of a zealot. In so much there is a strong touch of Jellicoe. Yet the greatest influence in Chatfield's life was Jellicoe's opposite in so many ways, Beatty. From the day in 1911 when, as a junior captain aged thirty-eight, he first met Captain David Beatty, the Lord Chatfield of the future underwent a transformation. He fell under the dashing seaman's spell, and that the estimate was mutual was evidenced by Beatty keeping 'Chats', as he called him, ten consecutive years at his side. It was Beatty who brought out the latent driving force in the slightly younger man, which was to be of such value in later years and never more so than in today's multiple post. This drive should have been emphasized in the 'guide and arbiter' paragraph relating to war strategy steering.

The two sailors were side by side at Jutland, when an eye-witness, watching them together on the compass platform of the 'Lion', noted in his diary that their faces were 'wreathed in smiles . . . they reminded me of two boys at a Christmas party'; they were together on the bridge of the 'Queen Elizabeth' to take the cheers of the Grand Fleet returning to the Firth of Forth after convoying in the surrendered High Sea Fleet. From the bridge of the U.S. battleship 'Texas' in which I was a guest, we clearly picked out Beatty, but it was only that day that I first heard the name Chatfield. Which reminds me that the only real thing that came between the British and American Navies was the difference in the two national senses of

humour. With Beatty, it was all right. Irish, married to a Chicago Field and knowing the United States, he could more than follow those two yarning sailors, Admirals Sims and Rodman. But the Commander-in-Chief's Fleet Captain, Chatfield by name, gave trouble, and one day Sims took the matter in hand. He asked his host not to consider him discourteous if he failed to laugh at British funny stories. 'It is just that they begin at the beginning, end at the end, and have a full explanation sandwiched between.' Captain Chatfield wanted to know how that differed from the American variety. Why, said Sims, the American story leaves something to be inferred. Give us an example, invited Chatfield. So Sims obliged with one about a cowboy who hit a town and entered an eating-place. Under a table was a man laid out paralysed. The cowboy gave him a glance and called to the bartender: 'Give me some of that.' The 'Britisher' laughed, and Sims exonerated him.

Rodman used to report his ships to Beatty, 'All clean and sober, sir!' It was a true alliance.

Son of an admiral of Sussex yeoman stock—the family tree, at Ditchling, dates back three centuries—Ernle Chatfield entered the Navy as a boy of twelve, in 1886, joining the old 'Britannia'. After two years' preliminary training he set off 'to see the sea', as Fred Astaire has since sung. From fifteen to nineteen, Midshipman Chatfield was continuously away on service round the world at a time of momentous change, for this was the period marking the transition from sail to steam in the Royal Navy. The young officer's first ship was the 'Iron Duke', still classed as a sailer though in practice a twin-screw steam and sail vessel. A very different 'Iron Duke' Chatfield was to live to command, in the van of the Grand Fleet.

Most of those earliest years were passed in the South Atlantic and Pacific, firstly in the corvette 'Cleopatra'

and afterwards in the new armoured cruiser 'Warspite'. It was in 'Warspite' that Midshipman Chatfield had his first major sea thrill. Revolution broke out in Chili, and the ironclad battleship 'Blanco Encolada' was hit by a new wonder—the self-propelled torpedo fired from a torpedo gunboat. This was the first time in history that such an attack was attempted and it was successful. Under the eyes of a thrilled youth, the battleship sank.

The next thrill brought into perspective the German Fleet. As a lieutenant of twenty-two, Chatfield was in H.M.S. 'Royal Sovereign', flagship of the Channel Fleet, when she led the British Squadron at the opening of the Kiel Canal. That was perhaps the first really *kolossal* day for the young Kaiser who had dropped his pilot, Bismarck, but a few years before. Here was the birth of the historic dream 'Our future lies on the water!' The Baltic linked with the German North Sea, other than by the Kattegat, Heligoland a Prussian Gibraltar . . . watch out, England!

The next years were devoted to gunnery. Lieutenant Chatfield became a specialist just when gunnery began to emerge from the mediæval under the impetus of Rear-Admiral Fisher and Captain Percy Scott, both of the Mediterranean Fleet. The fighting range of fleets was then still well under a mile (Chatfield was to hit the 'Blücher' at Jutland at thirteen miles) and a reluctant Service had to be shown that its guns could improve on blazing away at stationary targets at laughable range. The advantages of the telescopic sight had to be drummed into doubting ears, and guns' crews had to be initiated into new methods of loading and aiming. Many of the ships looked askance at the revolutionary practices, so Fisher determined to set an example. He selected Lieutenant Chatfield to carry through the first long-range firing experiments, whose arresting success focused attention for the first time on the young officer.

Gunnery while on duty, sailing in his spare time: such was for several years the Chatfield rhythm in the Mediterranean where he became known for his handling of privately rigged craft. At that time officers were permitted 'private rigs'—that is, they could rig their launches after their own ideas and rivalry would be intense in finding the best rig for each type of boat. There was none keener than the gunnery officer of the 'Cæsar'. By an ironic trick, over thirty years later a First Sea Lord who had loved boat sailing as a young officer found it his duty to refuse a reintroduction of sail training into the Navy.

Sheerness Gunnery School, as First Lieutenant, and then Chatfield became Gunnery Officer in Captain Madden's brand-new cruiser 'Good Hope', the same that in the destiny of the sea survived only eleven years before going down with all on board in the Battle of Coronel. Whether the 'Good Hope's' gunnery then remained as good as once it had been hardly arose, as she was out-gunned and out-classed; but in her early days she was the gunnery pride of the Navy, and Commander Chatfield, the recognized cause. His first voyage in her had been the trumpeted carrying of Joseph Chamberlain to South Africa, after the Boer War, the Colonial Secretary then being the most discussed man in the Empire.

The successful career that the young Commander was shaping for himself found further emphasis when to him fell the much-coveted command of the Whale Island Gunnery School, where he remained for nearly four years. But it was rather uninspiring office work compared with what had gone before, and there were no regrets when the appointment came of Flag-Captain in Sir Colin Keppel's 'Albemarle', particularly as it synchronized with wedding bells. Captain Chatfield was now back in the Atlantic Fleet which he had left sixteen years before, but it was a very different force that he found based on Dover under

Prince Louis of Battenberg. This Admiral was demanding the highest standards in all weathers, from his captains, for war with Germany was already in the air. Those were days when the Navy was on every lip. The 'We Won't Wait' Dreadnoughts were in commission, and Mr Churchill was at the Admiralty. As it happened, however, the ardent times brought Chatfield his one slice of bad luck. Admiral Keppel transferring to the old 'Venerable', his Flag-Captain found himself unemployed and placed on half pay for the one and only time in his life. The inactivity was felt even more than it might have been normally, because Chatfield had met Beatty at Dover, and the spell of that inspiring soul had been cast.

The half-pay Captain did not have to wait long. Mr Churchill had acquired Beatty as Naval Secretary, possibly in a measure as Naval Tutor, and for the grand naval manœuvres of 1912 he caused this officer to be promoted Rear-Admiral, flying his flag in the 'Aboukir' at the head of a reserve cruiser squadron; and Beatty asked for Chatfield to join him as his Flag-Captain. The appointment only lasted for the manœuvres, two months, yet a partnership had been formed that was to be sealed in the summer of 1913 when Beatty hoisted his flag in the 'Lion', in command of the Battle-Cruiser Squadron that was to achieve legendary fame, and whose Flag-Captain was Chatfield.

In the short time that remained before the outbreak of war, Beatty and Chatfield did all they could to modernize thought concerning the conditions under which naval actions would very likely be fought. Beatty caused his captains to manœuvre their great ships at high speed by day and night, while his spirit of the offensive, inculcated into all his officers, found an expert channel of expression in his Flag-Captain, now perhaps the chief gunnery expert at sea. Captain Chatfield was four years in the 'Lion' with

Admiral Beatty, and six years on end at sea with him, and the interlude left a vital imprint on his whole character. The Admiral communicated boldness of spirit, his driving approach to everything.

When war set in, Beatty's battle-cruisers became the darlings of the British people. They were the source of the wildest rumours: what they had done, or were about to do. The spirit of Nelson lay upon them. In the outcome their part in the sea victory led to controversy beyond present scope. More appropriate may be their Flag-Captain's appreciation of the Squadron's duties. In retrospect Lord Chatfield saw the Squadron as a knight on a chessboard, whose task it was to make bold and unawaited excursions into the opponent's corner of the board. What is quite certain, no other big ships had such gruelling and continuous work to perform. It was just one sweep of the North Sea after another, often with only a night allowed on return to harbour, in which to take on thousands of tons of coal per vessel. Captain Chatfield's duties mounted to the herculean. He was Chief of Staff as well as in command of the 'Lion', and upon him fell responsibility for stores and general providing for the needs of a Force counting seven to eight thousand men, and operating always in secrecy. It was too much for one man, and soon Chatfield was left in command of the flagship, only.

The first of the three major naval actions in home waters introduced the battle-cruisers to an expectant public at home. Commodore Tyrwhitt's light forces from Harwich had ventured into the Heligoland Bight where they were soon hard pressed in thick weather, up against an unknown number of hostile warships and U-boats. Beatty arrived on the scene and was at once faced by a difficult problem. Should he run the big risk of rushing into the Bight? One or two of the Admiral's remarks on historic occasions are preserved: it was now that he turned to his Flag-Cap-

tain and reflected: 'Am I justified in going into that hornets' nest with these great ships? If I lose one it will be a great blow to the country.' After swift ponderation, the answer prompting Beatty was 'Go!' A fine action followed, in the course of which Tyrwhitt was rescued, and Lord Chatfield afterwards gave it as his opinion that Beatty's daring deserved to be notched beside the highest tactical decisions of the great admirals of history. Success was not the only thing it achieved. The action stimulated the Squadron, gave it confidence, as it thrilled a public that badly needed it, for the Battle of the Bight was fought when the Retreat from Mons had reached its most critical stage.

At the beginning of 1915 the battle-cruisers again went into action at the Dogger Bank. This was the first time modern capital ships were opposed to one another, and the lesson was none too heartening for the Admiralty. Failure to recognize that actions between great warships would be fought at ranges of a dozen miles or more, determined grave deficiencies in our ships whose protective armour was not designed to make allowance for shell-fire plunging down on to the decks from very long range. Our main armour was at the side and there was not time to remedy matters sufficiently by the time Jutland came round. Meanwhile, Captain Chatfield was to have an anxious interval. The 'Lion' was badly holed at the Dogger Bank, Beatty having to transfer his flag, and there ensued a highly precarious limping home to port by the stricken flagship, towed by the 'Indomitable' and with thousands of tons of water forward. It took several months to effect war-time repairs, and all the time Beatty was chafing to get back his flagship, badly wanted, aside from the Admiral's tempestuous impatience.

For the battle-cruisers, Jutland proved a terrible follow-on of the Dogger Bank, or of the fears then aroused. That plunging long-range fire of the enemy's was now terrifi-



LORD CHATHFIELD

cally concentrated, and Beatty's great ships had not the deck armour to withstand the shells. The 'Lion' led valiantly throughout. In his dispatch Beatty wrote: 'Capt. Chatfield commanded and fought my flagship with great skill and gallantry'. But what catastrophe did the two sailors contemplate from the bridge! At four o'clock in the afternoon, after the 'Queen Mary' had been blown up, the 'Indefatigable' vanished in a second rending explosion. Beatty took a long look through the smoke of battle, then uttered another of his gripping sentences: 'There seems to be something wrong with our bloody ships today, Chats. Steer two points nearer the enemy.'

Far from being a reckless gamble, this order was a clear-sighted manœuvre: if, reckoned Beatty, his vessels were being lost as a result of long-range fire plunging down on their ill-protected decks, the best chance was to engage the enemy more closely, as a result of which the German shells would hit the protected sides of the battle-cruisers.

At the end of 1916, Beatty took command of the Grand Fleet, upon Jellicoe, 'the only man who could have lost the war in an afternoon', going to the Admiralty as First Sea Lord. After a spell as Flag-Captain in the 'Iron Duke' while the new 'Queen Elizabeth' was being prepared for Beatty, Captain Chatfield transferred with his chief to the celebrated vessel, to this day heading a squadron of the line. There were to be no more battles, but the watch in the northern mists never could be relaxed, Captain Chatfield assuming an additional arduous task as Fleet Gunnery Officer, in which capacity he recast the whole system of gunnery, pruning away obsolete factors.

There is a picture of Beatty and his 'Chats' on the bridge of the 'Q.E.', in the Firth of Forth, on November 21, 1918. The Admiral is studying the German surrender procession through his glasses, and, judging by his expression of semi-incredulity, I should not be surprised if it was

just then that he turned to his Flag-Captain with a contemptuous: 'I never thought I'd bring them in on a piece of string!'

It certainly was a staggering performance. 'Yallah dawgs' was how they put it in the 'Texas'; yet one had to bear in mind that bolshevized sailors were running the show and that if no death or glory effort was tried, as some expected, that was not through lack of brave naval officers. Besides, not more than seventeen men were allowed to show themselves on deck, even in the biggest ships, and proportionately less in the others. An observation blimp towed above the head of the surrendering line, ensured proper behaviour by the Germans.

By the time the interned German crews scuttled their vessels at Scapa—'by appointment' as naval officers cryptically assured me when I dashed up to Thurso, now a special correspondent once again—Captain Chatfield had gone with the victorious Beatty to the Admiralty, as Fourth Sea Lord. Demobilization of a swollen war navy, further reorganization of gunnery, improvements and increases for all ranks, kept him busy. Nor was it to be an even period in view of the First Sea Lord's broom wielding and aggressive insistence with politicians who now were but vaguely interested in the Royal Navy. The two sailors must have found the trip to the Washington Conference akin to a brief spell of fresh air. It was 1923 before Rear-Admiral Chatfield returned to sea, in command of the Third Light Cruiser Squadron and flying his flag in H.M.S. 'Cardiff' (of the surrender blimp). The next return to Whitehall, as Third Sea Lord, found the Rear-Admiral closely concerned with the construction of the 'Nelson' and 'Rodney', the design of whose pioneer 16-inch guns he had in part influenced while Assistant Chief of Staff.

And so this sailor approached the nineteen-thirties, fated to be so important for him. Command of the Atlantic

Fleet, then Admiral and Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, gave ample scope for acquaintance to be made with these two great forces, especially on combined exercises. Yet Sir Ernle Chatfield was still largely unknown to the general public when he arrived in Whitehall to take over the duties of First Sea Lord. That was in 1933, and the immense task then entered upon has been noted. Its leading actor remained much of a cipher even when raised to the peerage and made Admiral of the Fleet. It was Mussolini's threat to the British Fleet at Alexandria, in the winter of 1935-36, that made the British people fleet-conscious once more, with the sequel that Admiral Lord Chatfield became a name and style suitable to the newspaper headlines. But the new British Navy that this sailor had caused to be laid down was then barely begun, and the country had to swallow dictator's medicine, accordingly.

The Admiral who had all his life dodged the limelight walked into it at Nyon, nor was the shifting beam ever to lose him for long thereafter. The two-day affair at Nyon cheered one up, coming, as it did, after a couple of years of humble pie. The League was in its September Session at the time, and none who went over from Geneva expected other than days of deadlock with more threats, attempted blackmail and successful bluffing at the expense of the poor democracies. How could Paris-London presume to force Hit and Muss to co-operate towards the cessation of submarine piracy in the Mediterranean?

What eventuated was the shortest, sharpest and most successful international conference in all the long long trail strewn backwards to Versailles. For the debonair Eden had brought along a new line in delegates: three high officers from the Admiralty who had it all worked out on paper, how to control the piracy by constant patrolling and the routeing of merchant ships. Supporting Lord Chatfield

was a second purposeful sailor whom most of the company were seeing also for the first time that day—Admiral Darlan.

The effect was that France and Britain, later joined by Italy off her own coastline, continued to patrol the Mediterranean until the end of the Spanish Civil War nearly eighteen months later. That forgotten patrol must have cost a tidy sum, but it did stop further U-boat rehearsing for the present war.

Retiring in 1938, Lord Chatfield was entitled to an indefinite 'easy' but Mr Chamberlain soon called on him. Defensive strategy in regard to India required to be examined on the spot. The finishing touches were still being put to this mission when summons came to return at once to England, to relieve the expert Church lawyer who had been co-ordinating the greatest Empire's defences. Hitler had just spoken in the Saar, less than a month after the Munich Agreement, and Downing Street had been painfully surprised by the Führer's definition of his will in respect of future British Cabinets: no more Edens or Duff-Coopers, Sinclairs or Churchills. Wasn't this going a little too far? Besides, the violence of language! Evidently the German Führer was not feeling one whit more appeased after his recent meal. Better get Chatfield back, the sooner the better.

The journey was made by flying-boat, and at Southampton first interviewers had to be faced: the gallant Admiral was now a politician and that would be part of the game. Even cameramen were suffered to penetrate the family circle—Lady Chatfield, a son and two daughters—at the Hampshire home of son-in-law Patrick Donner, M.P.

'For Faith and Home' runs beneath the Chatfield arms showing an Admiralty messenger and a naval gunner. A modest London house and the Army and Navy Club suit his Lordship; and maybe the Solent beckoning for *après la*

guerre provided the Royal Yacht Squadron doesn't frown too heavily on a private rig.

In the course of one of his confident broadcasts, Lord Chatfield expressed his belief that no two allies ever started a war with such complete machinery as did France and Britain. Their respective Governments at least thereby retrieved some of the ground lost by comportment in foreign affairs. But why should extra-political machinery, why should gallant admirals in retirement, only be summoned for war waging? The severe toss politicians have taken might be less enduring if we likewise started the peace with complete machinery such as never before.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

V.C., G.H.Q.

'MAY I QUOTE YOU A MAXIM BEQUEATHED BY VOLTAIRE TO the world,' said Lord Gort to a prize parade of R.A.F. cadets. "'Fate is temperament.'"

John Standish Surtees Prendergast Vereker, Sixth Viscount Gort, Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in France, is amply served by temperament which, the dictionary tells, is 'the whole of a person's natural tendencies as determined by his physical constitution and by his mental view and feeling'.

As a boy at East Cowes Castle, Isle of Wight, John Gort is said to have been fascinated by the portrait of his ancestor, Maurice, Lord of Prendergast, who fought against Strongbow in Ireland in 1169. A good deal of Irish lingers in the soldier who commands the B.E.F. Another Irishman, Field-Marshal the Earl of Cavan, has said of him that 'a man with those medals has no right to be alive. By all the laws of average he should have been killed half a dozen times'; which has a familiar ring of Irish temperament in battle. Then there is the playboy spirit. It may have been exorcised now, but it stayed on Irishly late: was not a distinguished Lieutenant-Colonel still busting up the mess at—of all places—the Camberley Staff College when well over thirty years of age? Again, there is an Irish absence of ceremony in 'the Office of the C.-in-C.' at G.H.Q., as when its *maître sans façon* told André Maurois to chuck his cigarette-end on the floor. I am thinking what degree of pale passion would have caused Sir Douglas Haig's features to quiver, if a visitor had thrown anything on *his* floor. Or take the Gort gusto, assuming Irish distinctiveness at boxing when he paid no attention to anything but the attack, and on the golf links where he never swung at, but hit at the ball. As for the hunting-field, it has been a wild case of ever up with hounds in advance of riding skill. In like vein,

there is the well-known reputed collision with Mr Hore-Belisha on the slopes of Suvretta.

Transport Minister: 'Can't you see where you're going? Couldn't you shout?'

Gort: 'I knew where I was going all right. But I couldn't do anything about it. If you had kept your eyes open, you'd have seen me coming.'

T.M.: 'It's not my job to dodge you! If you can't manage these things you ought to stay at home.'

Whereupon Gort glared at the now disentangled one, then burst into a laugh that rent the snowy stillness. 'You're Hore-Belisha, aren't you? I'm sorry, but there're no pedestrian crossings here, old man. When I'm about you're on the snow at your own risk. I'm not a good skier but I'm an enthusiastic one. Well . . . so long as you're not damaged . . . I'll be pushing on.'

This is certainly not verbatim, and it may be *ben trovato*, yet it does so strongly savour of this man who has gone *bang* into everything he has ever done, in play as in work. At the latter, the presence of imagination takes one further along the path of Irish temperament. Heaven forbid that I am rationing this attribute in respect of other peoples, yet imagination is at once associated with the Irish, and here is a Commander-in-Chief who is greatly interested in the personalities of the generals opposed to him. So was Irish Wellington. Yet the Irish in Lord Gort has been more than tempered by life-long contact with England; with a very English Isle of Wight, with London, with the ancestral Durham home of the Surtees, his mother's home and once that of the famous creator of 'Jorrocks'. The quiet, unassuming sureness in himself, the clear-headed purposefulness—these are English characteristics, as is the urge to pit himself against hardness in his recreations, and an iron self-discipline without which the intense Gort vitality, for so long finding outlet in fevered contest

or rampageous exploit, must have guided its possessor to lesser heights.

There is no record of anybody calling Lord Gort 'Tiger', except the newspapers. Long ago he was christened 'Fat Boy' in the Brigade of Guards: there was a famous Fat Boy of Peckham in Edwardian days, maybe that was the origin: but he is not so referred to any longer save in an attenuated surviving circle that knew him in his romping subaltern days when there must have been some physical ground for a label no longer substantiated in the trim young Guards Captain of 1914. Viscount Gort is not corpulent now; on the contrary, there is little superfluous flesh on his thick-set frame. But there is something about the shape of his body, about the big head and face, that gives a very young impression all round, and properly so, considering there never was so young an army as his. The vigour, animation and natural heartiness are redolent of the thirties rather than of the fifties. The absence of Anno Domini is most evident as he strides along on one of his hang-the-weather tramps, as likely as not without greatcoat or Burberry or gloves, just a short cane in his bare hand. Of average height, about five feet nine, Lord Gort has one abiding peculiarity. He always looks as if he were walking uphill, so much does he throw back head and shoulders. Uphill and with emphatic tread.

Sir Douglas Haig was a markedly handsome man, if pale and worn by 1918. No competition in that line comes from Lord Gort. Plenty of flesh on a large-featured face surmounted by a bald dome, sandy hair at the sides, a close-clipped moustache above a wide mouth. Not so ordinary, though, the eyes. One would have to travel a long way to meet their equal in lightest china blue, rarity the more arresting for their being set deep in a tanned countenance. Many a lovely would revel in possession of this contrasting china blue and healthiest tan.

If a dozen angels had attended baby Vereker in his cradle, and had interceded that the infant should live to lead an army in France, they could not have addressed themselves to a more scientific ordering of temperament and vocation. A soldier and the descendant of soldiers, Viscount Gort, V.C., has reached the heights, just as does a great writer or a great musician, and why should he not derive a kindred satisfaction from realization of his powers? Small use taking the line that if this soldier is happy where he is, it is a pity to have to say so. He didn't contribute towards making the war, which could not be said of any number of writers. In a warless world there might be a problem as to what Gorts could do with themselves in life; yet they would be so rare, and could always go chasing danger in some shape. Lord Gort is attuned to war because contest and conflict have ever been as the breath of life itself to him.

The Hon. John Vereker was a sixteen-year-old Harrovian when he succeeded his father as 6th Viscount. That was in 1902. Surtees wealth aided the Viscountcy, which dates back to the middle of the eighteenth century. The 2nd Viscount defeated the French in battle in 1798, Hoche's year, while another ancestor fought under Charles I in the Civil War. Yet the present holder of the title has prized the Surtees connection most. Some of boyhood's happiest days were spent riding over the Durham moors. Master John was for ever astride pony or horse, and once, when a particular piece of dare-devilry ended badly for him, the family groom uttered prophetic words. 'That little devil fears nothing!'

Sandhurst in 1904 marked the first stage of a military career that for ten subsequent years provided the *crème de la crème* of soldiering and then turned sharply to the most fatal active service in British annals, hateful to almost all save a percentage of Regular officers of the original layer.

Whether Lieutenant Lord Gort did or did not dislike the prospect of going on active service in 1914, active service had been one of the things he had missed in a life which for twenty-eight years had been otherwise lavish to him. The Guards did not then go even on foreign service, so the years had passed in a whirl of brilliant social life, in hunting and yachting, 'seeing life' and regimental 'rags', in an early marriage and with the proper attention given to military duties mostly executed in proximity to the Court. 'Fat Boy' Gort without a doubt threw himself into the full rhythm of those halcyon times, what with his vitality, income and gusto. But there is no record of it. Few outside 'Society' heard of Lord Gort until he began collecting decorations for valour with the B.E.F., and that could really be put down as 1918, when he was thirty-two. It was in the last year that his bravery became a legend, drawing tributes from the highest general officers and being perpetuated through the B.E.F. something after this fashion: 'This chap Gort must be a pretty stout egg, bit of a wonder. Commands the Grenadiers of course, suppose that's got something to do with it . . . still, how many D.S.O.s is it now? Three? And an M.C. as well, don't forget!' (That would be before the final V.C. left no further doubt possible as to the stoutness of the egg.)

Captain Lord Gort mingled spells at G.H.Q., on the staffs of Sir John French and Sir Douglas Haig, with service in the line. He had quickly become a valuable authority on the new trench warfare, and possibilities of attack, as viewed from the front line. For that reason Robertson brought him along to meet Foch in 1915, when the Commander of the Northern Army Group listened attentively to the young officer, already in command of a battalion. One of Gort's friends at this time was the padre of a neighbouring French unit, by name Liénart. Today the Commander-in-Chief's headquarters are—shall we say—in the same hemi-

sphere as the episcopal palace of Cardinal Liénart, of Lille? 'We've both made headway,' as the soldier recently put it. 'He's got charge of a million souls and I'll soon have charge of a million men.'

Lord Gort was in several of the great actions of the first three years and in all of them in 1918, year of his apotheosis. He won his medals by a sustained combination of leadership and bravery. The old analysis of courage—that it is much easier for some men to be brave, who are not built to think about it but just bash ahead—has been examined and re-examined in this soldier's regard. That a crazy luck constantly attended non-stop recklessness, has been asserted by critics, never lacking, of this officer. On the other hand, men who fought with him say that the decorations came along simply as a result of Gort fulfilling his duties in their utmost degree. It wasn't a question of his 'enjoying' things any more than other people did. But his fixed attitude was that, what had to be done, had to be done, and that as long as he could try for it, he would do so. If one had to pronounce, the temptation might be to consider Lord Gort's courage apart from that of most of his fellows to the extent that he did always enjoy a scrap so: something of that must have invaded his bearing in battle. The overcoming of hazards shot with danger was always a delight to him. An identical urge must have worked in the boy who jumped his pony at an obstacle and failed to pull the animal up according to plan at the edge of a quarry just on the other side, and in the grown man who fashioned so superhuman a day for himself by the Canal du Nord on September 27, 1918.

Major Lord Gort had by then risen to command the 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards, and he had an orderly, Ransome by name, who never left his side, if he could help it. 'A young upstanding Guardsman of the finest type. A comrade of mine.' The two were together, as usual, on

the morning the Grenadiers were to participate in the successful storming of the Hindenburg Line. The Battalion attacked from Flequières, and Ransome was with his C.O. from the very outset. When the Major was wounded for the first time, the orderly was there to bandage him. Being hit meant one thing only to Gort: so long as he was not knocked out, a wound was a thing to patch up as quickly as possible. So presently the two carried on until Gort was hit a second time as he directed a fresh attack. This time it was more serious, and only Ransome's prompt application of a tourniquet saved his C.O.'s life. But no sooner the flow of blood arrested, than the comrades carried on once more, and luck remained on their side after that, until the day's objective was gained. Then, only, did Gort think of going back to the nearest dressing-station, Ransome still at his side—in fact, helping him along. The two had progressed a short distance when they came plumb in view of a German battery clearly visible less than a mile away, which began firing point-blank at the excellent target afforded by Gort's copiously bandaged figure. But it was not to be his turn. A shell blew off one of Ransome's arms and frightfully gashed a leg. No more going on was possible now, so Gort did what he could and stumbled off in search of a doctor. He eventually stumbled on another Guards battalion and at once prepared to start back with the M.O. He wouldn't hear of waiting to have himself attended to: his comrade was lying out there bleeding to death. Back through heavy fire the two searched and finally they found Ransome. He was fast dying, but his thoughts went immediately to his comrade. 'Get out of this, sir, as quick as you can,' he panted as his rescuers set about feverish bandaging. But it was hopeless. Those were the last words of Lord Gort's greatest comrade, who died as the heroic pair bore him back through the same heavy fire.

If Lord Gort long ago spoke rarely and in special circumstances of Ransome's death—notably, he went down to Somerset and told the parents—he never will have mention made of it now, and French visitors to his G.H.Q. are warned not to ask the Commander-in-Chief how he earned 'the decoration the most prized in the universe'. There has to be a white eye-witness of every act submitted for the V.C. That day's necessary testimony in Lord Gort's case was not lacking. But of course many acts deserving the V.C. must go unrewarded on account of the stipulation, and it is said that such was the explanation why Lawrence, who had only Arabs for eye-witnesses, never was awarded the coveted Cross; not that fortune's trick could greatly have worried that bright soul.

As for Lord Gort, it could be said he was winning the V.C. throughout that September day, up to the moment towards its close, when he was ordered to leave the field as no longer in a fit state to carry on. Every one of his officers and men had at one time or another been an eye-witness. Perhaps his loftiest moment came when he rallied a company from the top of a tank. But his courage was continuous and almost breath-taking. At one stage he would be lying almost unconscious on a stretcher. A little later he would be on his feet again, bandaged and gory, having recovered sufficient strength under stimulants.

When the Guards returned from France in March 1919 the name of Viscount Gort was emblazoned in the Press. The V.C., three D.S.O.s, the M.C., and—how many?—*nine* mentions in dispatches . . . what a gorgeous harvest for an infantry officer! Perhaps there is a tendency to associate such calibre honours and awards top-heavily with valour alone. Lord Gort was a prince of valour but he helped England most by being a leader. By consistently displaying leadership at the head of his men, by inspiring all by his presence and never-ending zeal, by showing

highest resource in front-line tactics, he contributed to the winning of fight after fight and thereby wove himself unmistakably into the mosaic of Haig's general victory.

The problem of readjustment that faced the hero was a keen one. Was he to revert to a jazzed-up version of the Court soldiering of pre-war days? Military glory was his in abundance, and he could be sure of a place at the very centre. But he was still under thirty-three and as fit as a brace of Strads. Surely there was something with more substance in it that he could do? Where was there an opening to advancement in an overcrowded Service about to be 'axed' and subjected to a rigid economizing regime? His very honours were almost a disadvantage, for soon he was reduced to Major, and what C.O. cared to have such a lore-laden second-in-command?

'I'm putting myself down for the Staff College. With luck, I may be accepted, and then I'll be able to learn something about soldiering,' he one day surprised his friends.

What, this soldier of almost unprecedented battle experience, this hero even to the great contemporary commanders, preparing to sit down and take tuition in the military art? Certainly, said Lord Gort. A man could fight in the front line for years but what did he ever get to know of the whole business and structure of the army behind? Just what did he know about the major problems of transport and supplies, or of the Adjutant-General's branch or of Intelligence? 'I'm going to learn the whole story about war,' he said. 'It's time I did.'

Candidates for Camberley were thereabouts as hand-picked as strawberries in December, but the Major was accepted and in 1920 sat down to apply himself to his self-set task. Yet if his goal was that of learning all about the profession in which he had achieved such dizzy eminence, he saw no reason why progress thither should be wrapped in dull care. In fact, stiff and routine Camberley was to

learn that little of playboy Gort had been suppressed. He arrived with a bang—to wit, in an awesome internal-combustion contraption promptly christened ‘Chitty-Bang-Bang’, and he continued for a long while to provide a whole series of bangs, even to exploding fire-crackers close to Pomposity. He became the *enfant terrible* of the College. It was the time of the anti-Bolshevik warring, and he formed ‘The Red Guard’ from trench cronies of days gone by. The ‘Reds’ would fight a ‘White Guard’ formed by an officer back from Russia, and wreckings of the mess grew to be as regular as varied and surprising escapades off duty. But if Gort had to find some outlet for his surplus gusto and vitality, he paid the closest attention to lectures. Anything to do with soldiering never found this officer other than concentrated and dead serious. It is the same today. He is capable of finding humour in most things but not in his job. At Camberley, he positively pestered the instructors by his avidity for supplementary information. At a moment when the whole world was bidding good-bye to war for a century ‘at least’, this soldier applied himself to its art with the eagerness of a medical student haunted by the cost of failure.

Gort did not fail, but to his great surprise was kept on as an instructor. Was this done because High Authority had decided he was too good to be lost, but that if anything big was ever to be made of him the playboy would have to be exorcized? If that was the notion it bore fruit. Lord Gort remained several years instructing in regions he had formerly wrecked, and on General Ironside’s term expiring in 1926, was appointed Chief Instructor. The present C.I.G.S. had the British Commander-in-Chief for four years under him, instructive spell to both parties. Head of the Staff College being a four-year appointment, if Lord Gort knows something about high command in war, that is because one way or the other he had ten solid years at



GENERAL LORD GORT, V.C.

Camberley in which to learn it, while himself teaching for the bulk of that time. As for the imprint of his passage, it is recorded that he introduced 'something of the foundry' to academic surroundings. 'Ginger' Gort would have been more apt than 'Tiger'. But are nicknames necessary?

The next years were suavely orthodox. Lord Gort, now a full Colonel, commanded the Grenadiers, held various staff posts. Bullets whizzed once again when he acted briefly as Chief of Staff to the Shanghai Defence Force. But there was nothing very much to do, for one so illustrious. Perhaps as welcome an event as any hereabouts was a legacy from the widow of an officer killed in France, not the sum involved, although it comprised the testator's whole fortune, but on account of the language in which the bequest was clothed. 'I wish to express to Lord Gort that the great happiness of my life has been in watching his fine character develop, his successful career, and the use he has made of his talents, wealth, and position in the unselfish service of his country.'

In these years Lord Gort was sometimes hard put to it to keep himself occupied. He went in for hazardous long-distance yacht racing in a fifty-tonner, without comforts of any kind, in pursuance of his belief that sport spiced by danger was not only the real thing but greatly formative of character. The Royal Yacht Squadron knew him well, for he continued faithful to Cowes of his boyhood, often in company of young people of his family—a daughter is today in the War Office, a son training for the Army. At the age of forty-seven, he learnt to fly. He was then still a Colonel, though promoted Brevet Major as far back as 1916. In 1935 came advancement to Major-General, and in the following year the St Moritz meeting with Mr Hore-Belisha.

The Minister of Transport was then six months distant from the War Office, but he had his eye on it. In the

snows he assuredly appraised Lord Gort anew, and again on returning to London. Mr Hore-Belisha has been a go-getter, of the attractive if diligent kind. He has closely quizzed everybody and everything calculated to affect the career of Mr Hore-Belisha. Politics resolve themselves into a game to be played seriously, which he enjoys, having industriously assimilated all the tricks of the trade, including a cheery self-advertisement greatly aided by a popularity acquired in the past in Fleet Street, and carefully conserved. Lord Gort's initial reaction had some reason to be the familiar Regular dismissal of 'the political bird' pushing himself forward with a lot of chat and mucking things round, of which he didn't know the beginning. This fellow Belisha was positively surrounded by self-lit beacons. Yet there were points of contact between these two men of the same mutilated generation. The civilian had proved himself a good soldier, he had vitality and temperament streaked with the playboy spirit, he fervently admired the French Army and would not stop short of turning the War Office into a foundry if that should contribute to his plan for recasting the British Army.

The first sign of anything peculiar was the announcement in the autumn of 1937 that Lord Gort had accepted the post of Military Secretary to the Minister for War. This enabled Mr Hore-Belisha to judge if the startling step he contemplated could be risked, as it provided an opportunity for the two men to see if they could work together. That was apparently settled quickly, for the year had not gone out before the Minister, wielding the most alarming broom in War Office annals, had Lord Gort raised to be Chief of the Imperial General Staff over the heads of thirty generals. 'Thank God we are now under a proper soldier, and shall not be shot sitting,' retorted sprightly eighty-six-year-old Sir Ian Hamilton, to much younger generals indignant at being passed over.

How much of Lord Gort there was in Mr Hore-Belisha's subsequent reconstruction and democratization of the armed land forces, is a secret between soldier and politician. The chapter was patently of Haldane calibre, and during it the Benjamin of army chiefs was presented with a final twenty months in which to familiarize himself with army organization as seen in its most rarefied stratum, before war moved him to a post more in his line.

It is something for a young army to know that its Commander-in-Chief once had no peer in courage on fields tragically close to those he daily surveys. The spirit of a general headquarters is that of its chief, and Lord Gort's G.H.Q. should be closer to the fighting troops and less a target for their shafts, than once was the case.

This C.-in-C. believes in sharing, within limits, the staple discomforts of his troops, though there must not be the faintest suggestion of a pose. It so happens that he likes living hard, yet he is mindful, no doubt, of the sour thoughts that used to be provoked by generals 'away from it all' in *kushi* châteaux. He thinks that four things primarily win wars. The spirit of the men, the co-operation of all ranks, the co-ordination of all departments, and the character of the Commander. The opening winter of the war he devoted to the three first. Especially the first. Spirits had to be maintained in the long months of inactivity and boredom amid rain, mud and cold. The Germans knew well what they were doing: trying to wear down the will-to-fight of the adversary. When battle is joined, the business of remaining alive amid the turmoil goes far to keeping the average soldier's mind occupied, and relief at finding himself still alive at the end of the day sharpens banal distraction and thereby wards off demoralization. But remove the battle and what is revealed? Modern warfare's boredom is rendered crushing by everybody standing round waiting, as it were. A sentiment of

aimlessness is communicated; that 'cut off' feeling in a foreign land, accentuated. Nor is there any glory going, or anything to write home about!

Lord Gort's first battle was with drooping spirits. He could not dope his army as did the enemy. He had to provide palliatives to chronic inactivity of body and mind, for men wise to what was going on in the world about them. So he set them to work on new defences, he secured for them all the comforts and mail possible, he expanded leave, and (symbolically speaking) he gave a *laisser-passer* to Gracie. (What counterpart had they behind the Siegfried Line to the incongruous Variety invasion of the B.E.F.?) What people at home did not bear sufficiently in mind, however, was that this army might have to move any day and in the most unexpected circumstances. It had to be held ready 'on a hair-spring'. It did not find itself in the winter quarters of olden times, when opposing armies withdrew into strong places, figuratively hauled up the drawbridges, and spent a carefree interlude.

'This is a mysterious war, invisible,' Lord Gort took leave of the veteran charcoal artist, Lucien Jonas, who once had drawn French and Haig at their—ghost—châteaux. 'But we're as lively as thoroughbreds. We want to get moving, go forward, and bite.' That is easy to believe of one who has only transferred his spirit of the offensive from advanced battalion H.Q. of yore, to a General Headquarters. The C.-in-C. is just as much on his toes as ever he was, because it is impossible for him to be anything different. His average seventeen-hour day (in the semi-warfare) has no trimmings and is conceived with just one idea: Continuous Action. From bath and billet, on to the road for a Gort stroll at five or more m.p.h.; breakfast in his own mess, usually with the Duke of Gloucester, one or other of his chief supporting officers, Lt.-Gen. Pownall, Chief of Staff, Lt.-Gen. Lindsell, Adjutant-General, and

Major Gordon, Military Secretary, who wears a kilt and sets the tone of a staff youthfulness in the holy of holies, that makes it look like a kindergarten compared with some aspects of Montreuil, a generation ago. But the present G.H.Q. is a contracted kind of Advanced affair that would grow notably if and as the rearward system, organized on a vast scale to handle many times the strength of this original B.E.F., swung into fuller action. At all hazards France must not be cluttered with British Army *until* . . .

At 8 a.m., across to G.H.Q., located in an old château, isolated and with nothing to draw attention to it. The morning is studded with appointments as the C.-in-C. clears up his work at a plain deal trestle-table in a small, bare room heated only by a tiny oil stove. Several items are War Office issue—the table accoutrements, the heating, the chairs, supplemented by a couple of ordinary collapsible canvas affairs for visitors. A tin of ‘gaspers’ to the fore. A few maps on the wall. Not an ornament nor a personal note. Especially no mascots. Spartan simplicity is the justified term, and the C.-in-C.’s example has spread, as intended.

‘He speaks freely and very well,’ reports that authority on British officers, the creator of ‘Colonel Bramble’. ‘I admired the precision of his information and the clarity of his mind. Much good sense. Gaiety. And always the astonishing vitality, coming out in his laugh, his movements, the rapidity of his words.’ Lord Gort uses short sentences and likes to ask information and opinions of others. This, with an open and hearty manner, promotes an easy atmosphere. Nothing shy or inhibited, as with Haig, and a poise and self-assurance that were missing in French.

It is a very compact headquarters, reminiscent of Sir Douglas Haig’s at Beauquesne during the Battle of the Somme. There, they were all together in the village school

—Operations, Intelligence, 'A' and 'Q'. (Thank goodness, I had a Nissen hut to myself along the road.) Lord Gort has only to cross a corridor to be with that important planner of action, his Chief of Staff. On the floor above, he has his Director of Intelligence—and I repeat that this Commander-in-Chief's deep and natural interest in the gentlemen opposite, from Von Brauchitsch down, augurs well. A sound Field Intelligence is the foundation of keeping down losses.

The balance of each day, after the trestle-table has played its part, is devoted to exhaustive contact with the British sector, in a green and khaki camouflaged car whose Union Jack painted on the windscreen is the only one. Conferences with his Corps Commanders, Irishmen both, Sir John Dill and Lt.-Gen. Brooke, visits to positions all over the sector and to the French, inspections. Lord Gort may have very human qualities, but watch out, that member of the B.E.F. caught showing real slovenliness. Then the china-blue eyes can show an alarming glint as anger rises. 'Shirking' he calls it, and shirking he abhors. A further duty of the C.-in-C. hinges on the steady arrival of Visitors.

Lord Gort's sentiment towards the French, the measure of his esteem, of his affection, was well illustrated when he put the celebrated slogans '*Ils ne passeront pas*' and '*Nous les aurons*' into his first Order of the Day. In which respect, this Commander-in-Chief's lack of experience of divisional and corps command and of some of the higher Staff progression is assuredly alleviated by the seasoned hand of Gamelin and of the *École de Guerre*, resting in friendliest gesture on his shoulder. When Lord Gort's former champion departed from the War Office, this friendly hand eased an awkward turning by bestowing the highest Legion of Honour award on the C.-in-C., signifying confidence. General Ironside was similarly decorated

beside Lord Gort, as if Gamelin had in mind: 'See that you pull together!'

There is a familiar picture of Sir Douglas Haig riding along at the head of his staff, an orderly carrying a pennoned lance and a guard of mounted military police bringing up the rear of the procession. Characteristic of a later Commander-in-Chief is the high-speed tramp through the mud, no more protected than his troops can be, and often less so: a tunicked figure treading along (uphill!), bare hands clasped behind him and an arm retaining his cane. If they one day put a statue in Whitehall to Lord Gort, let there be no charger of dubious stance: let it be as this B.E.F. knew him.

Authors who set themselves to writing of war lords and leaders while the conflict is yet engaged, operate on shifting sands. Between the conception of a book and its publication, this figure may be '*dégommé*', that choice overtaken in importance by one who has been omitted. As an instance, the role appearing to loom for Weygand's Syrian Army suggests that this celebrated soldier should have had the chapter given to Noguès; though I am protected in some degree by Weygand being already so familiar a figure to very many.

There is the other incalculable factor of fresh lances for liberty taking the field, with one's work in progress. Such a one as Marshal Mannerheim who fulfils entirely the conception of a 'lance' as viewed at the outset. At seventy-four, this former General of Tsarist cavalry arose for the second time in succour of Finnish independence—had the Finns persevered when he first gave them their freedom, in 1918, and gone on, as he begged them, to join Denikin and Koltchak, no Bolshevik Government might have existed a generation later to attack the Mannerheim Line.

The moving finger writes so urgently in twentieth-century war, that the Marshal may well be superseded by some later 'lance' as the year 1940 advances. If such should be the case, the newcomer, or newcomers, need not be ashamed to rub shoulders with the foregoing figures produced as an opening team by the decadent democracies.

